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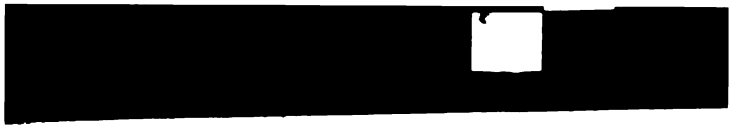
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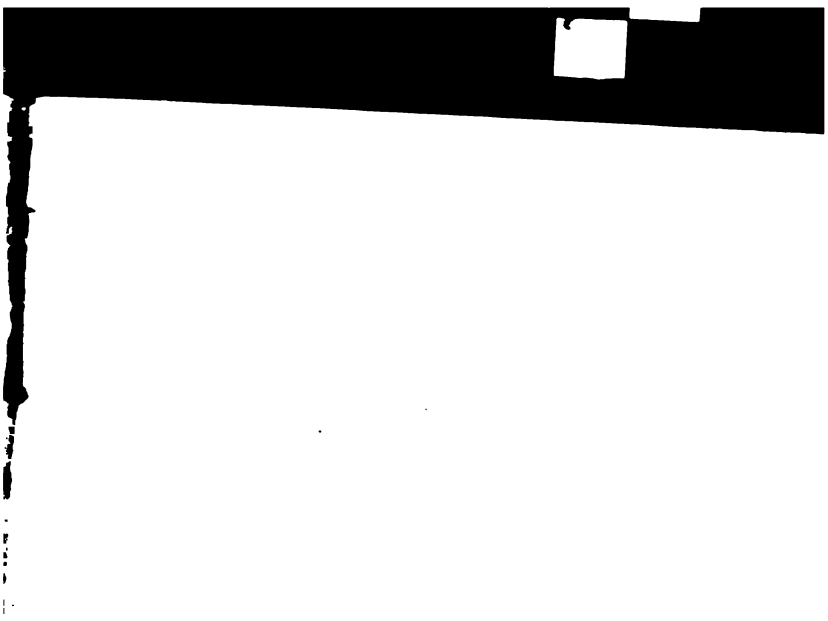




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THE KING'S POST.






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[*Front*

THE RIGHT HON. LORD STANLEY, K.C.V.O., C.B., M.P.
(Postmaster-General.)



The King's Post

Being a volume of historical facts relating to the Posts, Mail Coaches, Coach Roads, and Railway Mail Services of and connected with the Ancient City of Bristol from 1580 to the present time.

BY

R. C. TOMBS, I.S.O.

Ex-Controller of the London Postal Service, and late Surveyor-Postmaster of Bristol;

Author of "The London Postal Service of To-day" "Visitors' Handbook to General Post Office, London" "The Bristol Royal Mail."

Bristol

W. C. HEMMONS, PUBLISHER, ST. STEPHEN STREET.

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TO

THE RIGHT HON. LORD STANLEY,

K.C.V.O., C.B., M.P.,

HIS MAJESTY'S POSTMASTER-GENERAL,

THIS VOLUME IS DEDICATED

AS A TESTIMONY OF HIGH

APPRECIATION OF HIS DEVOTION

TO THE PUBLIC SERVICE AT

HOME AND ABROAD,

BY

HIS FAITHFUL SERVANT,

THE AUTHOR.





PREFACE.

WHEN in 1899 I published the "Bristol Royal Mail," I scarcely supposed that it would be practicable to gather further historical facts of local interest sufficient to admit of the compilation of a companion book to that work. Such, however, has been the case, and much additional information has been procured as regards the Mail Services of the District.

Perhaps, after all, that is not surprising as Bristol is a very ancient city, and was once the second place of importance in the kingdom, with necessary constant mail communication with London, the seat of Government.

I am, therefore, enabled to introduce to notice "The King's Post," with the hope that it will

prove interesting and find public support equal to that generously afforded to its forerunner, which treated of Mail and Post Office topics from earliest times.

I have been rendered very material assistance in my researches by Mr. J. A. Housden, late of the Savings Bank Department, G.P.O., London; also by Mr. L. C. Kerans, ex-postmaster of Bath, and Messrs. S. I. Toleman and G. E. Chambers, ex-assistant Superintendents of the Bristol Post Office.

I have gathered many interesting facts from "Stage Coach and Mail," by Mr. C. G. Harper, to whom I express hearty indebtedness; and I am also under deep obligation to Mr. Edward Bennett, Editor of the "St. Martin's-le-Grand Magazine," and the Assistant Editor, Mr. Hatswell, for much valuable assistance.

R. C. T.

BRISTOL, *September*, 1905.

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CHAPTER I.

THE EARLIEST BRISTOL POSTS, 1580.—FOOT AND RUNNING POSTS.—THE FIRST BRISTOL POSTMASTERS: ALLEN AND TEAGUE, 1644–1660.—THE POST HOUSE.—EARLIEST LETTERS, 1662.

THE difficulty in Queen Elizabeth's time of communicating with persons at a distance from Bristol before the establishment of a post office is illustrated by the following item from the City Chamberlain's accounts:—

"1580, August. Paid to Savage, the foot post, to go to Wellington with a letter to the Recorder touching the holding of the Sessions, and if not there to go to Wimborne Minster, where he has a house, where he found him, and returned with a letter; which post was six days upon that journey in very foul weather, and I paid him for his pains 13s. 4d."

The next record of a person performing postman's work in Bristol is that of 1615, when the

City Chamberlain paid a tradesman 12s. "for cloth to make Packer, the foot post, a coat." In 1616, Packer was sent by the same official to Brewham to collect rents, and was paid 3s. 8d. for a journey, out and home, of 60 miles. This system of a foot post to collect money in King James the First's reign appears to be an early application of the somewhat analogous plan, which of recent years has been under departmental consideration as "C.O.D.," or collection of business and trade charges by the postman on delivery of parcels—an exemplification of there being nothing new under the sun!

That travelling and the conveyance of letters was difficult in 1626 is evident from the fact that nearly £60 was spent in setting up wooden posts along the highway and causeway at Kingswood, for the guidance of travellers, the tracks being then unenclosed, so that the "foot post" must have had no enviable task on his journeys. In October, 1637, John Freeman was appointed "thorough post" at Bristol, and ordered to provide horses for all men riding post on the King's affairs of King Charles I. Letters were not to be



detained more than half a quarter of an hour, and the carriers were to run seven miles an hour in summer, and five in winter. A Government "running post" from London to Bristol and other towns was ordered on July 31st, 1638. No messengers were thenceforth to run to and from Bristol except those appointed by Thomas Withering, but letters were allowed to be sent by common carriers, or by private messengers passing between friends. The postage was fixed at twopence for under 80 miles, and at fourpence for under 140 miles.

In 1644 Lord Hopton "commanded" the grant of the freedom of Bristol to one Richard Allen, "Postmaster-General." In August, 1643, Lord Hopton was appointed Lieutenant-Governor of Bristol, and held that appointment until 1645, when Fairfax took the city. Probably Allen was Postmaster-General of Bristol, and his authority may have extended to other parts of the country that were held by the King's forces. Prideaux was appointed Master of the Posts by Parliament, and his jurisdiction extended as far as the country was under the control of Parliament, as distinguished from such parts of England as adhered

to the King. In 1644, however, very few places—Bristol was one of them—still adhered to Charles. At an earlier stage of the civil war special posts had been arranged for the King's service, and it is thought Bristol was one of the places to which these special posts were arranged.

In the Calendar of State Papers, under the year 1660, there is a complaint against one "Teig," an anabaptist Postmaster of Bristol, who broke open letters directed to the King's friends.

The complaint against him appears to have been very seriously considered by the authorities, and it induced his friends to take up the cudgels in his behalf as indicated by the following memorials :—

"To the Hon. John Weaver, Esq.: of the Council of State: Honoured Sir—Having so fit a Messenger I would not omit to acquaint you what a sad state and condition we are fallen into: How the good old cause is now sunke and a horrid spirit of Prophaneous Malignity and revenge is risen up Trampling on all those who have the face of godlinesse and have been of ye Parliamt party insoemuch that if the Lord doe not interpose I doubt a Mascare will follow."



" Sir—I have a request to make in the behalfe of this Bearer Mr Teage who is an honest faithfull sober man That you would stead him what you can about his continuance in the Post Office for this Citty. I beleive it will be but for a short continuance for I beleive that few honnest men in England shall have any place of trust or profit. The Cavilears Threaten a rooting out all Suddamly Thus with the tender of my old love and reall respects to you I take leave and Rest Your most humble and obliged servant, Ja Powell Bristoll this 14th April 60."

" To the Right Hon^ble^ the Comittee appointed by the Councill of State for the Management of the Poste affaire Whereas John Teage who hath formerly beene actually in Armes for ye Parliam^t^ and since that being an Inhabitant of this Citty hath beene Postmaster here for many years last past He being a person well qualified and capable for such an imploiment We doe therefore humbly recomend him to your Hono^rs^ to be continued in his said place And we doubt not of his faithfull management thereof

" Given under our hands at Bristoll this 14th

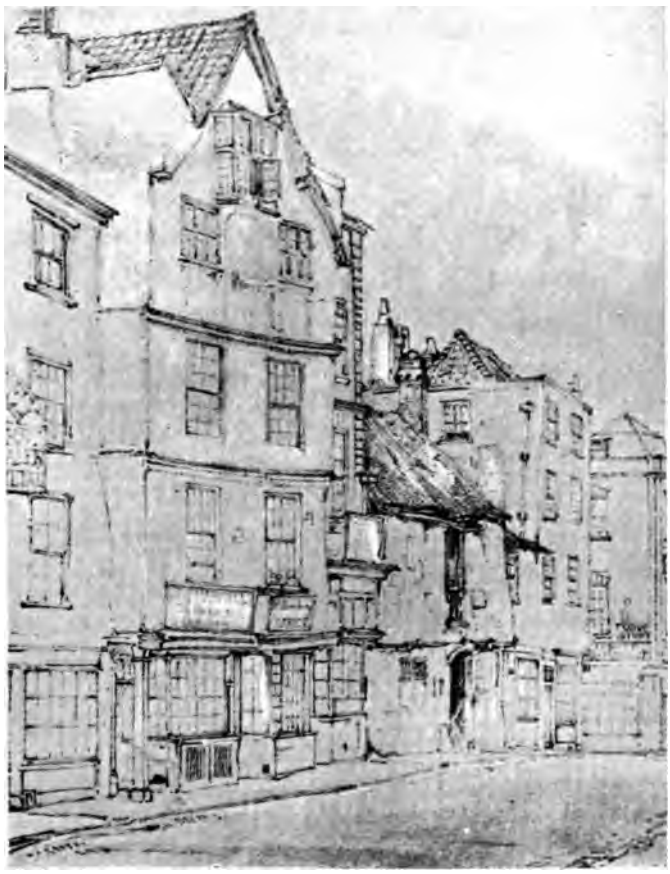
" day of Aprill 1660. Edwd. Tyson (?) *Mayr:*
" Henry Gibbes *Aldm* Robert Yates *Aldm*
" James Parsons Ch (?) Dooney George Lane, Junior, J. Holwey Nehe Cotting
" Andrew Hooke James Powell Richd Baugh Tho: Deane Robert Hann
" James Phelps (?) Abell Kelly."

(Two other names undecipherable.)

Having regard to the looseness of the spelling at that period, it is he, no doubt, who is mentioned later on as the " Mr. Teague " at the Dolphin, to whose care a Mr. Browne's letter was addressed in 1671. If Teig or Teague did continue at his post until 1671 he must have renounced his Anabaptist opinions and conformed, for no Postmaster was to remain in the service unless he was conformable to the discipline of the Church of England.

Evans mentions in his Chronological History, under 1663, a letter addressed: " To Mr. John Hellier, at his house in Corn Street, in Bristol Citty," from which it may be inferred that a postman was then employed for deliveries in the principal streets.





THE OLD POST-HOUSE IN DOLPHIN STREET, BRISTOL.



In the Broadmead Chapel Records (1648–1687), published in 1847, and now in the Baptist College, there is mention, at page 126, of a letter of Mr. Robert Browne, "To my much revered brother, Mr. Terrill, at his house in Bristol. To be left with Mr. Mitchell, near the Post Office." The letter was dated Worcester, 15 d. 1 m. 1670–1, and signed Robert Browne, with this foot-note, "I am forced to send now by way of London." A second letter of Mr. Browne, sent in April, 1671, is mentioned likewise. It is addressed "To my respected friend Mr. Terrill, at his house in Bristol: To be left with Mr. Teague at the Dolphin, in Bristol," and begins "My dear Brother, I hope you have receeived both mine, that one sent by the way of London, the other by the trow from Worcester."

CHAPTER II.

THE POST HOUSE AT THE DOLPHIN INN, IN DOLPHIN STREET, BRISTOL, 1662.—EXCHANGE AVENUE AND SMALL STREET POST OFFICES, BRISTOL.

THAT a Bristol Post-house existed early in the reign of King Charles II. is indicated by a letter preserved at the Bristol Museum Library, which was sent in August of 1662 from Oxford, and is addressed: "This to be left at the Post-house in Bristol for my honoured landlord, Thomas Gore, Esquire, living at Barrow in Somerset. Post paid to London."

The Dolphin Inn was for several years—even down to 1700—the Bristol Post-house, and it was there that the post-boys stabled their horses. The inn long afterwards gave its name to Dolphin Street, which the street still retains. It is believed the inn stood near the low buildings with large gateway, in Dolphin Street, shown in the illustration. These premises at the time the picture





THE BRISTOL POST OFFICE, 1750–1868.



was drawn, in about 1815, had become the stables of the Bush Inn in Corn Street, long celebrated as Bristol's most famous coaching inn. The site has, until quite recently, been used in connection with the carrying business.

In 1700 the first actual Post Office was built. It was erected in All Saints' Lane, and was held by one Henry Pine, as Postmaster. This Post Office served the city's purpose until 1742, when the site was required in connection with the building of the Exchange, and the Post Office was transferred to Small Street. In September of that year (1742), an advertisement describes the best boarding school for boys in Bristol as being kept in Small Street by Mr. John Jones, in rooms "over the Post-house." What kind of building this was is uncertain, as there is no picture of it obtainable. Indeed, the first traceable illustration of a Bristol Post Office is the engraving, a copy of which is here reproduced, depicting the building erected in 1750, at the corner of the Exchange Avenue as it appeared in 1805, when it was described as "a handsome freestone building, situated on the west side of the Exchange,

to which it forms a side wing, projecting some feet forward in the street; on the east side being another building answerable thereto." These premises served as the Post Office for the long period of 118 years.

The first half of the present Bristol Post Office premises in Small Street was occupied by Messrs. Freeman and Brass and Copper Company.

As a matter of history, a copy of the abstract of conveyance may, perhaps, be fittingly introduced. It sets forth the particulars of the uses to which the site was originally put before taken by the Post Office.

" 21st December, 1865.—By Indenture between the Bristol City Chambers Company, Limited, (thereinafter called the Company) of the one part, and the Right Honourable Edward John Lord Stanley of Alderley, Her Majesty's Postmaster General for the time being, of the other part

" It is witnessed that in consideration of £8,000 paid by the said Postmaster General to the said Company the said Company did thereby grant and convey unto Her Majesty's Postmaster General his successors and assigns—



" Firstly All that plot piece or parcel of ground situate in the Parish of St.-Werburgh in the City of Bristol on the South West side of and fronting to Small Street aforesaid specified in the plan drawn in the margin of the first Skin of abstracting Indenture said piece of land being therein distinguished by an edging of red color which said plot of ground formed the site of a certain messuage warehouses and buildings recently pulled down which said premises were in certain Deeds dated 13th February, 1861, described as ' All that messuage or Warehouse situate on the South West side of and fronting to Small Street in the City of Bristol then lately in the occupation of Messrs. Turpin & Langdon Book Binders but then void and also all those Warehouses Countinghouse Rooms Yard and Buildings situate lying and being behind and adjoining to the said last named messuage or Warehouse and then and for some time past in the occupation of Messrs. John Freeman and Copper Company and used by them for the purposes of their Co-partnership trade and business.' Secondly, All that plot piece or parcel of ground adjoining the heredits firstly thereinbefore

described on the North West side thereof and also fronting to Small Street aforesaid and specified on the said plan and therein distinguished by an edging of blue color which said plot of ground formed the site of certain premises also then recently pulled down which said premises were in certain Deeds dated 13th February 1861 described as "All that messuage or dwelling-house formerly in the holding of Thomas Edwards Linen Draper since that of William Lewis Tailor afterwards and for many years of John Powell Rich then of George Smith as Tenants to Messrs. Bright & Daniel afterwards of Daniel George but then unoccupied situate and being No. 6 in Small Street in the Parish of St.-Werburgh in the City of Bristol between a messuage or tenement formerly in the possession of Messrs. Harford & Coy. Iron Merchants but then of the Bristol Water Works Company on or towards the north part and a Coach-house yard and premises then formerly in the occupation of Richard Bright and Thomas Daniel and then Co-partners trading under the Firm of the Bristol Copper Company but then the property of the said James Ford on



the South part and extending from said Street called Small Street on the East part backward to the West unto part of the ground built on by the said Copper Company the Wall between the Warehouse and said messuage."

When, in the year 1867, the plan for this new Post Office building in Small Street had been prepared and Treasury authority obtained for the expenditure of a sum of £8,000 in the erection of the building, the Inland Revenue Department asked for accommodation in the structure, and it was arranged that its staff should be lodged on the first floor of the new building. The building itself had, therefore, to be carried to a greater height than had originally been contemplated. This alteration cost £3,000. There is still evidence in the building of the occupation of the Inland Revenue staff, iron gates and spiked barriers in the first floor passage to cut off their rooms from the Post Office section still remaining.

The authorities of the Post Office accepted tenders in September, 1887, for the demolition of certain premises known as "New Buildings" and for the erection thereon of additional premises

for the accommodation of the growing Postal staff. The work began on the 26th September. The cost of the new wing was estimated at £16,000. Beneath the superstructure there were two tiers of ancient cellars, one below the other, forming part of the original mediæval mansion once owned by the Creswick family; and the removal of these was attended with much difficulty. The new building was opened for business on the 4th November, 1889.

In Parliament. Session 1903. Post Office (Acquisition of Sites) Power to the Postmaster-General to acquire Lands, Houses, and Buildings in Bristol for the service of the Post Office. Notice is hereby given that application is intended to be made to Parliament in the next session for an Act for the following purposes or some of them (that is to say):—To empower His Majesty's Postmaster-General (hereinafter called 'the Postmaster-General') to acquire for the service of the Post Office, by compulsory purchase or otherwise, the lands, houses, and buildings hereinafter described, that is to say:—

"Bristol: (Extension of Head Post Office).





[*By permission of "The Bristol Observer."*

THE BRISTOL POST OFFICE AS ENLARGED IN 1889.



Certain lands, houses, offices, buildings and premises situate in the parish of St. Werburgh, in the city and county of Bristol, in the county of Gloucester, and lying on the south-west side of Small Street, and the east side of St. Leonards Lane."

Thus commenced a portentous notice which appeared in a Bristol newspaper, and had reference to the Bristol Water Works premises being acquired for the further enlargement of the Post Office buildings.

The superficial area of the ground on which the Bristol Post Office stands is a little over 17,000 square feet. The new site joins the present Post Office structure, and has a frontage of 88 feet to Small Street. Its area is 11,715 superficial feet, so that the enlargement will be considerable but by no means excessive, having regard to the extremely rapid development of the Bristol Post Office business.

CHAPTER III.

ELIZABETHAN POST TO BRISTOL.—THE QUEEN'S PROGRESS, 1574.

PARTICULARS are on record respecting a very early Post from the Court of Queen Elizabeth to Bristol. At that period it occupied more days for the Monarch to travel in Sovereign State to Bristol than it does hours in these days of Great Western "fliers." It seems that Queen Elizabeth made a Progress to Bristol in 1574. She travelled from London by way of Woodstock and Berkeley. She arrived at Bristol, August 14, 1574, and had a splendid and elaborate reception :—

"Before the Queen left Bristol she knighted her host, John Young, who, in return for the honour done him, gave her a jewel containing rubies and diamonds, and ornamented with a Phœnix and Salamander. She did not get quit of the city until after she had listened to many weary verses



describing the tears and sorrows of the citizens at her departure, and their earnest prayer for her prosperity. From Bristol she travelled to Sir T. Thynne's, at Longleat, and from Longleat across Salisbury Plain to the Earl of Pembroke's, at Wilton, where she arrived September 3rd."

The British Museum records show that in 1580 Ireland was in rebellion. A Spanish-Italian force of eight hundred men had been sent, with at least the connivance of Philip II. of Spain, to assist the rebels, and the English Government was compelled to hurry reinforcements and supplies to Ireland. These reinforcements and supplies went by way of Bristol, and it was at that juncture of affairs that a post was established between London, or Richmond, where the Court was, and Bristol. This post, if not actually the first, was certainly one of the earliest posts to Bristol.

At a meeting of the Privy Council held September 26, 1580, a warrant was issued "to Robert Gascoigne for laying of post horses between London and Bristol, requiring Her Majesty's officers to be assisting unto him in this service."

A warrant was also issued "to Sir Thomas Heneage, Knight, Treasurer of her Majesty's Chamber, to pay unto Robert Gascoigne the sum of ten pounds to be employed about the service of laying post horses between London and Bristol."

The duty of laying this post was not entrusted to the Master of the Posts, Thomas Randolph, but to Gascoigne, the Postmaster of the Court, who usually arranged the posts rendered necessary by Queen Elizabeth's progresses through her dominions. Gascoigne afterwards furnished an account of what he had done to carry out the Order of the Privy Council, and from this document, which is preserved at the Record Office in London, it seems that the post travelled from Richmond, or London, to Hounslow, and thence to Maidenhead (16 miles), Newbury (21 miles), Marlborough (16 miles), Chippenham (22 miles), and thence to Bristol (20 miles). The cost of the post for a month of 28 days is stated to have been £14 9s.; but it does not appear if this amount is in addition to the £10 ordered to be paid to Gascoigne for laying the post; nor is there any-



thing to show how often the post travelled, or for how long it was maintained; Gascoigne describes it as an "extraordinary" post. At that time the only ordinary posts were from London to Berwick, Holyhead, and Dover respectively. It is, perhaps, as well to add that these posts were the Queen's posts, and were only intended for the conveyance of persons travelling on her service, or of packets sent on her business, though other persons used the posts for travelling and for sending letters.

Several complaints were made by Leonard Dutton and another against Robert Gascoigne, Postmaster of the Court, in respect of abuses connected with the posts thus laid down for Queen Elizabeth's use while on a "Progress." The complainants charged Gascoigne with neglect of duty, laying posts to suit his own convenience, delaying letters, making improper charges, and stopping something for himself out of money he should have paid in wages, etc. Among the papers relating to this affair is a copy of part of Gascoigne's account, of which the following is a transcript:—

THE OFFICE OF THE POSTE.

In the office of William Dodington, Esquire, Auditor of Her Matie. Impreste, in the bill of accompt for Her Matie poste among other things is contained the following:

"Robert Gascoigne's bill for the laying of the extraordinary post on Her Majesty's Progress.

"BRISTOLL.—Thomas Hoskins and a constable entered post at Bristol for serving x. days begun xiij. of August until the xxij. of the same month, half days included, at ij.s. per diem. "xx.s.

"MANGOTSFIELD.—Philip Alsop and John Alsop, post at Mangotsfield for serving v. days begun the xviij. of August and ended the xxij. of the same month, half days included, at ij.s. per diem. "x.s.

"CHIPPENHAM.—John Barnby and Leonard Woodland entered post at Chippenham for serving x. days begun the xviij. August and ended the xxvij. of the same month, half days included at ij.s. per diem. "xx.s.

"MARLBOROUGH.—Thomas Pike and Anthony Ditton entered post at Marlborough for serving



xvij. days begun the xviij. August and ended the third day of September, half days included at ij.s. per diem. " xxxiv.s.

" Exd. per me BARTH. DODINGTON."

As to the Marlborough post, Anthony Ditton was Mayor of the town, as appears from a certificate by him (which is with the papers) that he only received from Gascoigne 15s. for the posts. Gascoigne claimed to have paid at Marlborough 34s. (see the transcript of his account), and if Ditton was entitled to half that sum Gascoigne pocketed 4s. (£19 15s. 4d.). This is the sort of thing Ditton charged him with doing. To these charges Gascoigne gave a denial, separately explaining each charge. His explanation was accepted, inasmuch as he was continued in office.

CHAPTER IV.

THE ROADS.—THE COACH.—MR. JOHN PALMER'S MAIL COACH INNOVATIONS, 1660–1818.

IN 1660–1661, James Hicks, Clerk to "The Roads" in the Letter Office, petitions the King to be continued in office. He says he sent the first letter from Nantwich to London in 1637, and was sent for in 1640 to be Clerk for that Road (Chester Road). Had settled in 1642 "Postages between BRISTOL and YORK for your late father's service."

In 1661, Henry Bisshopp, farmer of the Post Office, furnished to the Secretary of State "a perfect list" of all officers in the Post Office. According to this list there were eight Clerks of the Roads, viz.:—Two of the Northern Road, two of the Chester Road, two of the Eastern Road, and Two of the Western Road. In 1677, there were, in addition to these Roads, the Bristol Road and the Kent Road. As there was a





From an old print.

A STATE COACH OF THE PERIOD (17TH CENTURY) WHEN KING CHARLES I. SOJOURNED AT SMALL STREET, BRISTOL, ON THE SITE OF THE PRESENT POST OFFICE.



Post-House at Bristol in 1661, no doubt the city was attached to the Western Road.

There were only six stage-coaches known in 1662. A journey that could not be performed on horseback was rarely undertaken then by those who could not afford their own steeds.

Amongst the State papers in May, 1666, is an account of the time spent in carrying the mails on the chief routes throughout the country. Although the speed fixed by the Government for the post-boys was seven miles an hour in the summer months, the actual rate attained on the Bristol, Chester, and York Roads was only four miles, and was half-a-mile less on the Gloucester and Plymouth routes. An appended note stated that a man spent seventeen or eighteen hours in riding from Winchester to Southampton. In December, Lord Arlington complained to the postal authorities that the King's letters from Bristol and other towns were delayed from ten to fourteen hours beyond the proper time, and ordered that the Postmasters should be threatened with dismissal unless they reformed.

In 1667 a London and Oxford Coach was

performing the 54 miles between the two cities in two days, halting for the intervening night at Beaconsfield: and in the same year the original Bath Coach was the subject of this proclamation:

"FLYING MACHINE."—"All those desirous of passing from London to Bath, or any other place on their Road, let them repair to the 'Belle Sauvage' on Ludgate Hill, in London, and the 'White Lion' at Bath, at both which places they may be received in a Stage Coach, every Monday, Wednesday, and Friday, which performs the whole journey in Three Days (if God permit) and sets forth at 5 o'clock in the Morning.

"Passengers to pay One Pound Five Shillings each, who are allowed to carry fourteen Pounds Weight—for all above to pay three-halfpence per Pound."

It was only after repeated appeals to the Government that a "Cross Post" was established between Bristol and Exeter for inland letters in 1698, thus substituting a journey of under 80 miles for one of nearly 300, when the letters were carried through London. In this case, however, Bristol letters to and from Ireland were





I've nothing to brag on — But driving my Waggon



excluded from the scheme, and they still had to pass through the Metropolis.

Even at a later date, when strong representations were made to the Post Office, Ralph Allen, of Bath, who had the control of the Western Mails, refused to allow a direct communication between Bristol and Ireland, but offered if the postage from Dublin to London were paid, to convey the letters to Bristol gratis.

At this period there were quaint public waggons on the Bristol Road, as depicted in the illustration.

The "Pack Horse" at Chippenham, and the "Old Pack Horse," and the "Pack Horse and Talbot," at Turnham Green, were, in 1739, halting places of the numerous Packmen who travelled on the Bristol and Western Road.

By 1742 a stage-coach left London at seven every morning, stayed for dinner at noon in Uxbridge, arrived at High Wycombe by four in the afternoon, and rested there all night, proceeding to Oxford the next day. Men were content to get to York in six days, and to Exeter in a fortnight.

In 1760, in consequence of frequent complaints

as to the dilatoriness of the postal service, the authorities in London announced that letters or packets would thenceforth be dispatched from the capital to the chief provincial towns "at any hour without loss of time," at certain specified rates. An express to Bristol was to cost £2 3s. 6d.; to Plymouth, £4 8s. 9d. Leeds, Manchester, Birmingham, Liverpool, were not even mentioned.

The mail-coach system had its origin in the West of England, and Bristol and Bath in particular are associated with all the traditions of the initiatory stages, so that the details on record in ancient newspapers of those cities are copious.

Mr. John Weeks, who entered upon "The Bush," Bristol, in 1772, after ineffectually urging the proprietors to quicken their speed, started a one-day coach to Birmingham himself, and carried it on against a bitter opposition, charging the passengers only 10s. 6d. and 8s. 6d. for inside and outside seats respectively, and giving each one of them a dinner and a pint of wine at Gloucester into the bargain. After two years' struggle, his opponents gave in, and one-day journeys to Birmingham became the established rule.





[*From "Stage Coach and Mail," by permission of Mr. C. G. Harper.*

JOHN PALMER AT THE AGE OF 17.



Soon after this period, John Palmer, of Bath, came on the scene. He had learnt from the merchants of Bristol what a boon it would be if they could get their letters conveyed to London in fourteen or fifteen hours, instead of three days: John Palmer was lessee and manager of the Bath and Bristol theatres, and went about beating up actors, actresses, and companies in postchaises, and he thought letters should be carried at the same pace at which it was possible to travel in a chaise. He devised a scheme, and Pitt, the Prime Minister of the day, who warmly approved the idea, decided that the plan should have a trial, and that the first mail-coach should run between London and Bristol. On Saturday, July 31, 1784, an agreement was signed in connection with Palmer's scheme under which, in consideration of payment of 3d. a mile, five inn-holders—one belonging to London, one to Thatcham, one to Marlborough, and two to Bath—undertook to provide the horses, and on Monday, August 2, 1784, the first "mail-coach" started.

The following was the Post Office announcement respecting the service:—"General Post Office,

July 24, 1784: His Majesty's Postmaster-General being inclined to make an experiment for the more expeditious conveyance of the mails of letters by stage-coaches, machines, etc., have (*sic*) been pleased to order that a trial shall be made upon the road between London and Bristol, to commence at each place on Monday, August 2 next, and that the mails should be made up at this office every evening (Sundays excepted) at 7 o'clock, and at Bristol, in return, at 3 in the afternoon (Saturdays excepted), to contain the bags for the following post towns and their districts—viz., Hounslow—between 9 and 10 at night from London; between 6 and 7 in the morning from Bristol. Maidenhead—between 11 and 12 at night from London; between 4 and 5 in the morning from Bristol. Reading—about 1 in the morning from London; between 2 and 3 in the morning from Bristol. Newbury—about 3 in the morning from London; between 12 and 1 at night from Bristol. Hungerford—between 4 and 5 in the morning from London; about 11 at night from Bristol. Marlborough—about 6 in the morning from London; between 9 and 10 at night from





The LETTER WOMAN.

(From an old print.)

THIS SIMPLE BOY HAS LOST HIS PENNY,
AND SHE WITHOUT IT WON'T TAKE ANY;
WHAT CAN HE DO IN SUCH A PLIGHT?
THIS LETTER CANNOT GO TO-NIGHT.

Printed by Carrington Bowles, 69, St. Paul's Churchyard, London.



Bristol. Chippenham—between 8 and 9 in the morning from London; about 7 in the evening from Bristol. Bath—between 10 and 11 in the morning from London; between 5 and 6 in the afternoon from Bristol: Bristol—about 12 at noon from London.

"All persons are therefore to take notice that the letters put into any receiving house in London before 6 in the evening, or before 7 at this office, will be forwarded by this new conveyance; all others for the said post-towns and their districts put in afterwards, or given to the bell-men, must remain until the following post, at the same hour of 7 o'clock. [At this period there were Post Office bell-women as well as bell-men. See illustration.]

"Letters also for Colnbrooke, Windsor, Calne, and Ramsbury will be forwarded by this conveyance every day; and for Devizes, Melksham, Trowbridge, and Bradford on Mondays, Tuesdays, Wednesdays, Thursdays, and Saturdays; and for Henley, Nettlebed, Wallingford, Wells, Bridgwater, Taunton, Wellington, Tiverton, Frome, and Warminster, on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays:



"Letters from all the before-mentioned post-towns and their districts will be sorted and delivered as soon as possible after their arrival in London, and are not to wait for the general delivery.

"All carriers, coachmen, higglers, news carriers, and all other persons are liable to a penalty of £5 for every letter which they shall receive, take up, order, dispatch, carry, or deliver illegally; and to £100 for every week that any offender shall continue the practice—one-half to the informer. And that this revenue may not be injured by unlawful collections and conveyances, all persons acting contrary to the law therein will be proceeded against, and punished with the utmost severity.

"By command of the Postmaster-General,

"ANTHONY TODD, Sec."

The *Bath Chronicle* versions were as follows, viz.:—"July 29, 1784. On Monday next the experiment for the more expeditious conveyance of the mails will be made on the road from London to Bath and Bristol. Letters are to be put in the London office every evening before 8 o'clock, and to arrive next morning in Bath before 10 o'clock,





[*By permission of Kelly's Directories, Lim.*

THE OLD GENERAL POST OFFICE IN LOMBARD STREET, LONDON.



and in Bristol by 12 o'clock. The letters for London, or for any place between or beyond, to be put into the Bath Post Office every evening before 5 o'clock, and into the Bristol office before 3 o'clock in the afternoon, and they will be delivered in London the next day."

The public were also informed that the mail diligence would commence to run on Monday, August 2, 1784—and that the proprietors had engaged to carry the mail to and from London to Bristol in sixteen hours, starting from the Swan with Two Necks, in Lad Lane, London, at 8 o'clock each night, and arriving at the Three Tuns, Bath, before 10 o'clock the next morning, and at the Rummer Tavern, Bristol, by 12 o'clock. "The mail is to leave Bristol from the Swan Tavern for London every afternoon at 4 o'clock, and to arrive in London before 8 o'clock the next morning."

On August 5, we are told, "the new mail diligence set off for the first time from Bristol on Monday last, at 4 o'clock, and from Bath at 5.20 p.m. From London it set out at 8 o'clock in the evening, and was in Bath by 9 o'clock the next morning.

"The excellent steps taken to carry out this undertaking leave no doubt of its succeeding, to the great advantage and pleasure to the publick. The mail from this city is made up at 5 o'clock." This grand achievement of Palmer's was signalised by the following lines :—

"A safe and quick method is found to convey
Our bills of exchange, and I promise to pay :
Political news from all parts of the town,
The Senate, the play, and each place of renown:
New pamphlets and schemes, or the prices of stocks,
That trafficks in ports, and escaped from the rocks.
At Bristol Hotwells or the New Rooms at Bath
Arrived Mr. Fancy and Lady Hogarth,
Who looked so enchanting last week at the races,
And *nemine contra* pronounced by the graces:
Effusions of friendship or letters of love—
All beautiful, candid, as true as a dove.
J'espere, ma chere ami, qui ce bien avec vous,
And friendly whip syllabub chat *entre nous:*



The merchant, the lover, the friend, and the sage
Will daily applaud Mr. Palmer's New Stage."

No sooner was success apparent than troubles commenced, as may be gathered from the following paragraph, dated September 9, 1784:—"Bath: We hear that the contractors for carrying the mail to and from this city and London have received the most positive orders to direct their coachmen, on no account whatever to try their speed against other carriages that may be set up in opposition to them, nor to suffer them to discharge firearms in passing through any towns, or on the road, except they are attacked."

"They have generally performed their duty with great care and punctuality, within an hour of the contracted time and perfectly to the satisfaction of the Government and the publick, and this before any opposition was commenced against them, and when it was thought impossible to effect it in sixteen hours instead of fifteen hours. Their steady line of conduct will be their best recommendation to this city, which, much to its honour, has supported them with great spirit. Attempts

by other drivers of other coaches, or any other persons whatsoever, to impede the mail diligence on its journey will be certainly attended with the most serious prosecutions to the parties so offending.

" We are desired by the old proprietors of the Bath coaches to insert the following :—

" ' Last Sunday evening, as the coachman of the mail diligence was driving furiously down Kennet Hill, between Calne and Marlborough, in order to overtake the two guard coaches, the coach was suddenly thrown against the bank, by which means a lady was much hurt, as was also the driver. The lady was taken out and safely conveyed in one of the guard coaches to Marlborough.'

" We are informed :—The proprietors of the two coaches, with a guard to each, which travel from Bristol to London in fifteen hours have instructed their servants not to fire their arms wantonly, but to be particularly vigilant in case of attack The proprietors of these coaches are determined to have the passengers and property protected and for the safety of both have ordered their





[*By permission of S. W. Partridge & Co., Paternoster Row, London.*

ANTHONY TODD.



coachmen to keep together to make assurance doubly sure."

September 16, 1784:—"Our mail diligence still continues its course with the same steadiness and punctuality. Yesterday its coachman and guard made their first appearance in Royal livery, and cut a most superior figure. It is certainly very proper that the Government carriages should be thus distinguished; such a mark of His Majesty's approbation does the contractors great honour, and it is with much pleasure we see so great a change in the conveyance of our mail—not only in its speed and safety, but in its present respectable appearance, from an old cart and a ragged boy."

December 16, 1784:—"A writer, under the signature of 'An Enemy to Schemers,' having published in the *Gazette* several letters against the new mode of conveying the mail, another writer, under the signature of 'Lash,' has in a masterly manner replied to all his arguments in that paper of Monday, and has severely censured the conduct of Mr. Todd of the Post Office."

December 16, 1784:—"Dear Sir,—I have just received some newspapers from a friend in Bath

containing an abusive letter against my post plan, and two answers to it under the signature of 'Lash.' I rather think that the latter may be yours, and think myself much obliged to you for the warmth with which you have taken the matter up, but could wish you would take no further notice of it. The letter, if I recollect right, merely contains the refuse of the observations, sent from the Post Office to the Treasury, which have been fully refuted to the board. It might appear these are like doubting the justice of that Court were I to suffer myself to be decoyed or provoked into another. Two years have already been wasted in wrangling, and I am heartily weary of it. Since my return I have the satisfaction to find the public, if possible, still more pleased from the experience they have had of the punctuality as well as the expedition of the post in all possible cases, in every variety of weather our climate gives. And those who express their surprise that the plan is not extended yet to other parts of the kingdom I have taken care to tell the plain truth—that it is entirely Mr. Todd's fault. I could not express my sense of his exceeding ill conduct at the com-



mencement of the trial (so very different from his profession) in a stronger manner than in my memorial to the Treasury; nor could they do me ampler justice than in the resolutions they passed on the occasion and sent to the Post Office. It should not therefore be stated to the public his stopping the Norfolk and Suffolk service by his assertion of the enormous expenses of the new beyond the old system, and his strange declaration that the number of letters sent by the Bath and Bristol post had decreased and in consequence of its improvement are so ill-supported by the statements sent to the Treasury, and the reverse of these charges so fully established in my answers that I believe there is an end of the controversy, and have very little doubt but that I shall shortly receive the Ministers' commands to carry the plan into execution to the other parts of the kingdom: To do this (and I have not the least fear of accomplishing it) will be the most decisive answer to abuse, and more satisfactory to the publick. I rather think, too, from the number of memorials sent in favour of my plan, and the general indignation expressed at the mismanagement of the old

post, Mr. Todd will find it prudent to desist from further opposition. Nothing possible can be in better train than the plan is or in the hands of persons more anxious for its success. It would be very imprudent, therefore, to run the least hazard of disturbing it. I beg you'll not imagine I am the least displeased at what you have done. On the contrary, I am really much obliged to you; and be assured I shall never forget the zeal and attention I have experienced from you in the course of this business, and that you will always find me your sincere friend.—JOHN PALMER, Arno's Vale, Bristol, December 2, 1784."

December 16, 1784:—"Our mail carriage has, if possible, added to its reputation from its extraordinary and ready exertions on the bad weather setting in. It arrived here on Saturday an hour only after its time, and this morning was within the limited time. The Salisbury mail, which should have come in on Saturday by eight in the morning did not arrive till Sunday morning."

January 20, 1785:—"The new regulation of our post turns out a peculiar advantage to this city, in that letters can be sent from here in the evening



and answered in London next morning's mails, which enables business people to stay here longer."

On February 22, 1785, the Town Council minutes contain the following:—"Mr. May acquainted the members present that the inhabitants of this city, as well as those of other places, having derived great benefit from Mr. Palmer's plan lately adopted for the improvement of the post, was the occasion of his calling them together to consider such measures as might be thought proper for continuance and extension of the said plan. It was resolved that a memorial be sent to the Right Hon. Wm. Pitt, representing the great benefits received from the plan, and requesting a continuance of the same, together with the extension of the same plan to other parts of the kingdom."

February 17, 1785:—"At a meeting of the Bristol Merchants' Society on Saturday last, a vote of thanks was passed to Mr. John Palmer for the advantages received from his postal plan."

February 24, 1785:—"Memorials appear to the Right Hon. Wm. Pitt for the continuance and extension of Palmer's plan from the merchants,

tradesmen, shopkeepers in the city of Bristol, Common Council of the city of Bristol, Mayor, Burgesses and Commonality of the city of Bristol, Mayor, Aldermen and Common Councilmen of the city of Bristol."

On March 24, 1785, appeared the following letter:—"London, February 16, 1785. Sir,—Having both of us been engaged upon Committees of the House of Commons, we have been unable to present the paper you transmitted to us respecting Mr: Palmer's plan to Mr. Pitt till within these few days. Mr. Pitt has desired us to acquaint Mr: Mayor and the Corporation that he feels himself very happy to have assisted in giving such an accommodation to the city of Bath as he always hoped that plan would afford, and in which he is confirmed by the manner in which the Corporation have expressed themselves concerning it. Measures are being taken to carry it into execution through other parts of the kingdom, and the plan will be adopted in a few days upon the Norfolk and Suffolk roads.

"A. MOYSEY and J. J. PRATT.

"To Philip Georges, Esq., Deputy Town Clerk."



May 12, 1785 :—" Bath Post Office. A further extension of Mr. Palmer's plan for the more safe and expeditious conveyance of the mails took place on Monday, the 9th inst., when the letters on the cross posts from Frome, Warminster, Haytesbury, Salisbury, Romsey, Southampton, Portsmouth, Gosport, Chichester, and their delivery, together with the Isle of Wight, Jersey and Guernsey, all parts of Hampshire and Dorsetshire, will be forwarded from this office at five o'clock p.m., and every day except Sundays. Letters from the above places will arrive here every morning, Mondays excepted.

" N.B.—All letters must be put in the office before five o'clock p.m."

May 18, 1785 :—" We hear that Mr. Palmer's plan for conveying the mails will be adopted from London to Manchester through Leicester and Derby, and to Leeds through Nottingham, at Midsummer."

June 9, 1785 :—" Mr. Williams, the public-spirited master of the Three Tuns Inn, and the chief contractor for conveying the mails, had in the morning of this day placed in the front of his

house His Majesty's Arms, neatly carved in gilt: In the evening his house was illuminated in a very elegant manner with variegated lamps, the principal figure in which was the letters 'G. R.' immediately over the coat-of-arms. A band of music with horns played several tunes adapted to the day, and a recruiting party drawn up before the doors with drums and fifes playing at intervals had a very pleasing effect."

On June 30, 1785, appeared the following paragraph, which shows how complete was the success of John Palmer's post plan, in spite of all the obstacles placed in his way to obstruct his scheme. We are now informed that the " mail-coaches and diligences have been found to answer so well that they will be generally adopted throughout the kingdom, and conveying of them in carts will be discontinued."

On June 30 appeared a long letter showing how the G.P.O. tried to overthrow Mr. Palmer's scheme. This is signed Thomas Symons, Bristol, and describes the scheme as the most beneficial plan that ever was thought of for a commercial country. He also complains of the misconduct



of the Post Office, as letters had been miscarried to Dublin, which caused the merchants of Bristol considerable annoyance, and this mismanagement without hesitation he declares was by design, in order to try and overthrow this most excellent system of John Palmer's post.

Early in 1787, Palmer had to represent to the Contractors that the Mails must be carried by more reliable coaches.

"The Comptroller-General," he wrote to one Contractor, "has to complain not only of the horses employed on the Bristol mail, but as well of their harness and the accoutrements in use, whose defects have several times delayed the Bath and Bristol letters, and have even led to the conveyance being overset, to the imminent peril of the passengers.

"Instructions have been issued by the Comptroller for new sets of harness to be supplied to the several coaches in use on this road, for which accounts will be sent you by the harness-makers. Mr. Palmer stated also that he had under consideration, for the Contractor's use, a new-invented coach."

Soon after this, Palmer's active connection with the Post Office ceased. He died at Brighton in 1818.

What he looked like at the age of 17 and 75 respectively, is shewn in the illustrations, the former taken from a picture attributed to Gainsborough.



J. Palmer

[*By permission of "Bath Chronicle."*

JOHN PALMER AT THE AGE OF 75.





CHAPTER V.

APPRECIATIONS OF RALPH ALLEN, JOHN PALMER, AND SIR FRANCIS FREELING, MAIL AND COACH ADMINISTRATORS.

ON the 25th April, 1901, the day after a visit to Bristol to celebrate the establishment of the new steamship line to Jamaica, the Marquess of Londonderry, then Postmaster-General, visited Bath to take part in a ceremony in honour of Ralph Allen and John Palmer. These two great postal reformers were both citizens of Bath, and are greatly honoured in that city for their work in the Post Office, with the famous men of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. By a happy thought there has lately been started a movement to keep alive associations with the past by placing tablets on the houses in which famous men lived. One of the tablets unveiled by Lord Londonderry was placed on the house in which Ralph Allen first conducted the business of the Bath Post Office,

and of his cross post contracts, and the other on the house in which John Palmer was born.

Soon after noon on the eventful day, the Bath postmen's band, Mr. Kerans, the postmaster, and his lieutenants, the staff of postmen and messengers, marched on to the space between the Abbey and the Guildhall for inspection by the Head of the Post Office Department. After the inspection, a procession was formed, in which the Postmaster-General was accompanied by the Mayor, and followed by the Town Councillors, two by two. Before them went the city swordbearer, clad in striking robes, and the party proceeded to the North Parade, from which Allen's house is now reached by a passage way. The house is built of stone, and has a very handsome front in the style of the classical Renaissance. In drawing aside the curtain, which veiled the tablet, on which was inscribed "Here lived Ralph Allen, 1727–1764," Lord Londonderry said that there was probably not one of the great men who had been associated with Bath who was more of a benefactor to his town, as well as to the public service of his country, than Ralph Allen. The



procession then moved on to Palmer's house, only a few yards away, where a similar ceremony took place. After another short speech by the Postmaster-General, in which he explained the share Palmer had borne in developing the modern Post Office system, the second tablet was unveiled. It bore the inscription, "Here lived John Palmer, born 1741, died 1818."

Afterwards at the Guildhall, where a bust of Allen in the Council Chamber looked down upon a large party assembled for luncheon, the Postmaster-General, in response to the toast of his health, discoursed more at large upon the topic of the day. He congratulated Bath upon having among its citizens two out of the four great men of Post Office history. It was Allen's task to provide a general postal system by opening up new lines of posts between the main roads, and through new lines of country. Between 1720, when he began his first contract, and 1764 when he died, he covered the country with a network of posts, giving easy communication between all important towns, and he also increased the number and speed of the mails on the post roads. While

doing this he raised himself from being a humble clerk, and later, postmaster of Bath, to a position of great affluence, and of friendship with many of the great men of his time. Among those friends was Lord Chatham.

It was twenty years after Allen's death that Palmer's Mail Coach system was started. Its advantage soon made itself apparent, and the improvement of roads at the end of the 18th Century enabled the mail coach service to be brought to great perfection. It lasted less than 60 years, but in those years correspondence and the revenue of the Post Office multiplied many times, and when Rowland Hill turned his attention to postal questions he found a rapid and efficient service, which was at the same time so cheap that the cost of conveyance was only a small item in the expenses of the Post Office.

The Mayor of Bath proposed the toast of " the Visitors," and said that they had amongst them two representatives of the great men they were honouring. Ralph Allen was represented by Colonel Allen, a direct descendant, and the owner of Bathampton Manor, a part of Ralph Allen's





[*From a block kindly lent by the Proprietors of the "Bath Chronicle."*]

MEDAL STRUCK IN HONOUR OF RALPH ALLEN.



estate. Colonel Allen had lately returned from South Africa. John Palmer was represented by his grandson, Colonel Palmer, R.E.

Colonel Allen thanked the company for their kind reception, and Colonel Palmer said that it had given him the greatest pleasure to witness the testimonial to his grandfather's services, and this pleasure would be shared by the members of his family, including his sister, who had given the cup on the table to the Corporation. It had been a present from the Citizens of Glasgow to John Palmer.

Full accounts of the Post Office services of Allen and Palmer are written in "The Bristol Royal Mail."

The photograph of a curious memorial of Ralph Allen's work in the Post Office here reproduced is that of a medal bearing the Royal Arms, and the inscriptions "To the Famous Mr. Allen, 4th December, 1752," and "the Gift of His Royal Highness, W. D. of Cumberland."

The reverse of the medal is engraved with some Masonic emblems, and with the words,

" Amor Honor Justitia,"
INO CAMPBELL,
Armagh.
No. 409.

The history of this relic is rather obscure. It was purchased in a curiosity shop in Belfast some fifteen years ago by Mr. D. Buick, LL.D., of Sandy Bay, Larne. In the year 1752, the Princess Amelia visited Bath, and was entertained by Ralph Allen at Prior Park. During her stay at Bath, the Duke of Cumberland also visited the town, and is known to have contributed £100 to the Bath Hospital, of which Allen was one of the most active supporters. It has been surmised that the medal was intended as an acknowledgment of the courtesy and attention received by the Duke and the Princess on this occasion.

Whether the medal was ever presented is not known, or how it came to be converted into a Masonic jewel. Perhaps it may have been given away by Allen, or it may have gone astray, or been stolen. The Masonic Lodge, No. 409, is said to have been founded by a Mr. John Campbell in 1761, shortly before the date of Allen's death. Allen may have been a Freemason.















[*By permission of Mr. Sydenham, of Bath.*

TOKENS COMMEMORATIVE OF PALMER'S MAIL COACH SYSTEM.



It is to Mr. Sydenham, of Bath, that indebtedness is due for the interesting impressions of tokens struck in commemoration of Palmer's mail coach system here depicted.

An interesting tribute was the painting by George Robertson, engraved by James Fittler, and inscribed to him as Comptroller-General in 1803, eleven years after he had ceased to hold that position. A copy of this engraving appears in "The Bristol Royal Mail." Palmer also received the freedom of eighteen towns and cities in recognition of his public services, was Mayor of Bath in 1796 and 1801, and represented that city in the four Parliaments of 1801, 1802, 1806, and 1807.

Francis Freeling, who succeeded John Palmer in the Secretaryship and General Managership of Post Office affairs, was as a youth a disciple of his predecessor, and assisted him in the development of the Mail Coach system. He was apprenticed to the Post Office in Bristol, where his talents, rectitude of conduct, and assiduity in the duties assigned him gained for him the esteem and respect of all those connected with the estab-



lishment; and, on the introduction by Mr. Palmer of the new system of Mail Coaches, Mr. Freeling was appointed in 1785 his assistant to carry the improvements into effect. He was introduced into the General Post Office in 1787, and successively filled the office of surveyor, principal surveyor, joint secretary with the late Anthony Todd, Esq., and sole secretary for nearly half a century.

In Mr. Dix's "Life of Chatterton," it is stated, on the authority of a friend of the Chatterton family, that on Chatterton leaving for London, "he took leave of several friends on the steps of Redcliff Church very cheerfully. That at parting from them he went over the way to Mr. Freeling's house." It is further stated that Mr. Freeling was father to the late Sir F. Freeling.

As regards Freeling's birthplace, information is forthcoming which seems conclusive. In a collection of old Bristol sketches purchased for the Museum and Library, there is a beautiful drawing of Redcliffe Hill, executed about eighty years ago; and the artist, doubtless acting on





+ BIRTHPLACE OF SIR FRANCIS FREELING, BART.,

Secretary to the General Post Office.



the evidence of old inhabitants—contemporaries of Freeling—has distinctly marked the house where that gentleman was born, and noted the fact in his own handwriting.

Permission has been obtained from the council of the Bristol Museum and Reference Library for the picture to be photographed. The following is the superscription on the back of the original pencil drawing:—"Redcliffe Pit, Bristol. The house with this mark + at the door is the house in which Sir Francis Freeling, Bart., was born. The high building, George's patent shot tower, G. Delamotte, del. Jan. 12, 1831." A copy of the sketch is here reproduced. The house as "set back" or re-erected is now known as 24, Redcliffe Hill.

Sir Francis Freeling first carried on his secretarial duties at the old Post Office in Lombard Street, once a citizen's Mansion. There he was located for 30 years.

On September 29th, 1829, the Lombard Street Office was abandoned as Headquarters, and Freeling moved, with the secretarial staff under his chieftainship, to St. Martins-le-Grand.

In 1833 the question arose whether the mail coaches should be obtained by public competition, or by private agreement, but Sir Francis Freeling's idea was to get the public service done well, irrespective of the means.

On this point Mr. Joyce, C.B., in his history of the Post Office, wrote that in 1835 the contract for the supply of mail coaches was in the hands of Mr. Vidler, of Millbank, who had held it for more than 40 years, and little had been done during this period to improve the construction of the vehicles he supplied. Designed after the pattern in vogue at the end of the last century, they were, as compared with the stage coaches, not only heavy and unsightly, but inferior both in point of speed and accommodation. Commissioners appointed to inquire into the system, altogether dissatisfied with the manner in which the contract had been performed, arranged with the Government not only that the service should be put up to public tender, but that Vidler should be excluded from the competition. This decision was arrived at in July, 1835, and the contract expired on the 5th of January following. To



invite tenders would occupy time, and after that mail coaches would have to be built sufficient in number to supply the whole of England and Scotland. A period of five or six months was obviously not enough for the purpose, and overtures were made to Vidler to continue his contract for half a year longer. Vidler, incensed at the treatment he had received, flatly refused: Not a day, not an hour, beyond the stipulated time would he extend his contract, and on the 5th of January, 1836, all the mail coaches in Great Britain would be withdrawn from the roads. Freeling, now an old man, with this difficulty to overcome, had his old energy revived, and when the 5th of January arrived there was not a road in the kingdom, from Wick to Penzance, on which a new coach was not running. It was then that the mail coaches reached their prime.

Amongst the deaths announced in the *Felix Farley's Journal* under date of January 14th, 1804, is that of "the lady of Francis Freeling, Esq., of the General Post Office," and another part of the paper contains the following paragraph :—

"The untimely death of Mrs. Freeling is lamented far beyond the circle of her own family, extensive as it is. The amiableness of her manner and the rational accomplishments of her mind had conciliated a general esteem for such worth, through numerous classes of respectable friends, who naturally participate in its loss."

Freeling's obituary notice, which appeared in the same *Journal* on July 16, 1836, ran as follows:

"Saturday last, died at his residence in Bryanston Square, London, in the 73rd year of his age, Sir Francis Freeling, Bart., upwards of 30 years Secretary to the General Post Office. Sir Francis was a native of Bristol—he was born in Redcliffe Parish—and first became initiated in the laborious and multifarious duties attendant upon the important branch of the public service in which he was engaged in the Post Office of this city of Bristol, from whence he was removed to the Metropolitan Office in Lombard Street, on the recommendation of Mr. Palmer, the former M.P. and Father of George Palmer, the present member for Bath, who had observed during the period he was employed in first establishing the mail-



coach department the quickness of apprehension, the aptitude for business, and the steadiness of conduct of his youthful protégé. Sir Francis rapidly rose to notice and preferment in his new situation; and after his succession to the office of Chief Secretary, it is proverbial that no public servant ever gave more general satisfaction by his indefatigable attention to the interests of the community, or than he invariably shewed to those of the meanest individual who addressed him; whether from a peer or peasant, a letter of complaint always received a prompt reply. The present admirable arrangements and conveniences of that noble national establishment, the newly-erected Post Office, were formed upon the experience and the suggestions of Sir Francis and his eldest son. A more faithful and zealous servant the public never possessed. The title he enjoyed was the unsolicited reward for his services, bestowed upon him by his Royal Master George the 4th, from whom he frequently received other flattering testimonials of regard and friendship. In Sir Francis Freeling was to be found one of those instances which so frequently

occur in this country of the sure reward to industry and talent when brought into public notice. In speaking of his private character, those only can appreciate his worth who saw him in the bosom of his family—to his fond and affectionate children his loss will be irreparable. To possess his friendship was to have gained his heart, for it may be truly said he never forgot the friend who had won his confidence; particularly if the individual was one who, like himself, had wanted the fostering hand of a superior. Sir Francis was always found to be the ready and liberal patron of talent in every department of literature, science, and the fine arts. Considering the importance and multiplicity of his public avocations, it was surprising to all his friends how he could have found leisure to store his mind with the knowledge he had attained of the works and beauties of all our most esteemed writers; his library contains one of the rarest and most curious collections of our early authors, more particularly our poets and dramatists; in the acquirement of these works he was engaged long before it became the fashion to purchase a



black letter poem, or romance, merely because it was old or unique. But his highest excellencies were the virtuous and religious principles which governed his whole life; his purse was ever open to relieve the distress of an unfortunate friend, or the wants of the deserving poor. Many were the alms which he bestowed in secret; which can be testified by the writer of this paragraph, who knew him well, and enjoyed his friendship."

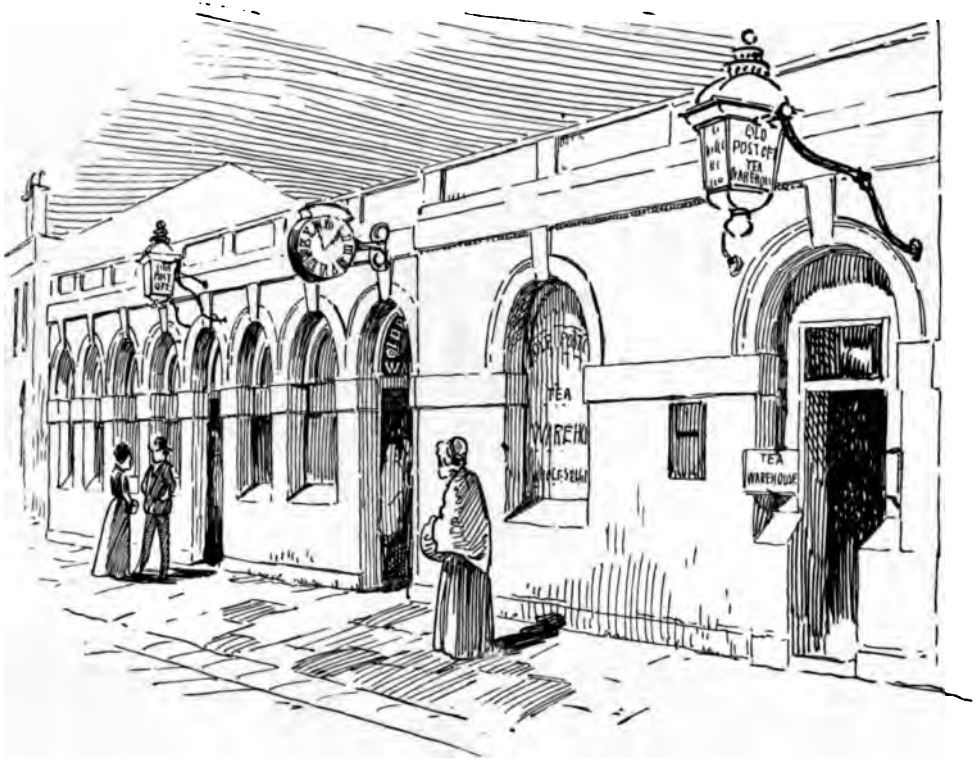
Miss Edith Freeling, now resident in Clifton, grand-daughter of Sir Francis Freeling, and daughter of Sir Henry Freeling, and who was actually born in the General Post Office, St. Martin's-le-Grand, London, where her father had a residence as Assistant Secretary, has in her possession several "antiques" belonging to her ancestors.

A worn-out despatch box used by Sir Francis in sending his papers to the Postmaster-General is one of the prized articles. A very handsome gold seal cut with the Royal Arms, and bearing the legend—General Post Office Secretary—is another of the relics. Likewise a smaller gold

seal with a Crown, and "God Save the King," as its legend.

At the time of his death, Sir Francis Freeling's snuff boxes numbered 72, the majority of which had been presented to him. Apparently "appreciations" took a tangible form in those days! His son, Sir Henry, likewise had snuff boxes presented to him.

A handsome specimen snuff box is now in Miss Freeling's hands. It is made of tortoise-shell, it has the portrait of King George the IVth as a gold medallion on the top, and was known as a Regency Box. The inscription inside is, "This box was presented to G. H. Freeling by His Majesty George IVth on board the Lightning steam packet on his birthday twelfth August 1821 as a remembrance that we had been carried to Ireland in a Steam Boat." As Sir Francis Freeling migrated from the Bristol service to Bath in 1784, it must have been at the Old Bristol Post Office, near the Exchange, indicated by the illustration, that he commenced that public career which was destined to be one of brilliant achievements for the department during the many years he presided over



THE OLD BRISTOL POST OFFICE IN EXCHANGE AVENUE.





it as permanent chief, and of great good to his country in the way of providing means for people to communicate with each other more readily than was the case before his day.

CHAPTER VI.

BRISTOL MAIL COACH ANNOUNCEMENTS, 1802–1830.—THE NEW GENERAL POST OFFICE, LONDON.

HOW our forefathers got about the country, and how the Mails were carried as time went on after Allen and Palmer had disappeared from Mail scenes, and Freeling had taken up the reins, the following announcements, taken from *Bonner and Middleton's Bristol Journal*, and from the *Bristol Mirror* respecting Mail Stage Coaches will aptly indicate. They are quoted just as they appeared, so that editing may not spoil their originality or interest :—

"A letter from Exeter, dated May 10, 1802, said :—'Last Thursday the London mail, horsed by Mr. J. Land, of the New London Inn, Exeter, with four beautiful grey horses, and driven by Mr. Cave-Browne, of the Inniskilling Dragoons, started (at the sound of the bugle) from St. Sydwells, for a bet of 500 guineas, against the



Plymouth mail, horsed by Mr. Phillips, of the Hotel, with four capital blacks, and driven by Mr. Chichester, of Arlington House, which got the mail first to the Post Office in Honiton. The bet was won easily by Mr. Browne, who drove the sixteen miles in one hour and fourteen minutes.—Bets at starting, 6 to 4 on Mr. Browne. A very great concourse of people were assembled on this occasion.' "

On Saturday, October 2, 1802, it was announced that " the Union post coach ran from Bristol every Sunday, Wednesday and Friday morning over the Old Passage, through Chepstow and Monmouth to Hereford, where it met other coaches, and returned the following days. Coaches left the White Hart Inn and the Bush Tavern for Exeter and Plymouth every morning, by the nearest road by ten miles. Fares: To Exeter, inside, £1 1s.; outside, 14s.; to Plymouth, £1 11s. 6d. and £1 1s. Reduced fares are offered by the London, Bath, and Bristol mail coaches—to and from London to Bristol, inside, £2 5s.; from London to Bath, £2. Parcels under 6lb. in weight taken at 6d. each, with an engagement

to be responsible for the safe delivery of such as are under £5 in value."

In August, 1803, passenger traffic to Birmingham caused rivalry among the coach proprietors. A new coach having started on this route, three coaching advertisements were issued :—

Under the heading "Cheap Travelling to Birmingham," the "Jupiter" coach was announced to run from the White Lion, Broad Street, every Monday and Friday afternoon, at two o'clock, through Newport, Gloucester, Tewkesbury, and Worcester to Birmingham ; the "Nelson" coach from the Bush Tavern and White Hart every morning at three ; and the mail every evening at seven. "Performed by Weeks, Williams, Poston, Coupland and Co."

The "Union" coach altered its times of leaving the Boar's Head, College Place—"in order to render the conveyance as commodious and expeditious as possible"—to Sunday, Tuesday and Thursday mornings at seven o'clock, over the Old Passage, through Chepstow, Monmouth, Abergavenny, and Hereford, where it met the Ludlow, Shrewsbury, Chester, and Holyhead



coaches, and returned the following days, and met the Bath, Warminster, Salisbury, and Southampton coaches every Saturday, Tuesday, and Thursday mornings at seven o'clock. "Performed by W. Williams, Bennett, Whitney, Broome, Young and Co."

"A new and elegant coach, called the 'Cornwallis,'" left the Lamb Inn, Broadmead, every Monday, Wednesday, and Friday afternoon, at two o'clock, through Newport, Gloucester, Tewkesbury and Worcester, to the George and Rose Inn, Birmingham, where it arrived early the next morning, whence coaches set off for the Midlands, North Wales, and the North of England. The proprietors pledged themselves that no pains should be spared to make this a favourite coach with the public; and as one of the proprietors would drive it a great part of the way, every attention would be paid to the comfort of passengers. The fares of this coach would at all times be as cheap as any other coach on the road, and the proprietors expected a preference no longer than whilst endeavouring by attention to merit it. "Performed by Thomas Brooks and Co., Bristol."

March 10, 1804:—"The 'Cornwallis' coach to Birmingham is to set out from the Swan Inn, Maryport Street, at three every morning, Sundays excepted, through Newport, Gloucester and Worcester, and arrive at the Rose Inn, Birmingham, early the same evening. The fares of this coach and the carriage of goods will be found at all times as cheap as any other coach on the road." At this period Admiral Cornwallis, whose name this coach bore, was fighting the French with his fleet off Brest.

On August 19, in that year (1804), the public were respectfully informed, that "a light four-inside coach leaves the original Southampton and general coach offices, Bush Inn and Tavern, Bristol, every morning (Sundays excepted), at seven o'clock precisely, and arrives at the Coach and Horses Inn, Southampton, at five in the afternoon. The Gosport coach, through Warminster, Salisbury, Romsey and Southampton, Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday mornings at five o'clock. To Brighton, a four-inside coach in two days, through Warminster, Salisbury, Romsey, Southampton, Chichester, Arundel, Worthing



and Shoreham, on Monday, Wednesday and Friday mornings at seven, sleeps at Southampton, and arrives early the following afternoon. Portsmouth Royal Mail, through Warminster, Sarum, Romsey, and Southampton every afternoon at three o'clock. Also the Oxford Royal Mail, every morning at seven o'clock."

On August 18, 1823, the state of the roads comes under review :—" Mail men, who have to drive rapidly over long distances, must ever be on the look-out for the state in which the roads are kept.

" In December, 1819, Mr. Johnson, Superintendent of Mail Coaches, had to report to the House of Commons on the 'petition of Mr. McAdam,' who was engaged in constructing and repairing of the public roads.

" Previous to this the roads were very bad in most country places, except the mail coach roads, built at the time the Romans came to England.

" McAdam's expenses up to 1814 amounted to £5,019 6s., actually expended by him up to August, 1814, and he had travelled 30,000 miles in 1,920 days.



" He held the position of general surveyor of the Bristol turnpike roads, at a salary, first year £400, and each subsequent year of £500, but, taking into account that the annual salary was £200 for expenses 'incident' to the office, the remaining £300 was not more than adequate payment for the constant and laborious duties attached to the situation."

Under date of November 8, 1823, there is a list of Royal mails and post-coaches despatched from and arriving at the Bush Tavern, Corn Street, Bristol :—" London, daily, 4.0 p.m.; and at reduced fares by the 'Regent' at 9.0 p.m.; Milford and Waterford, via Cardiff and Swansea, 10.30 a.m. daily; Birmingham, Manchester and Liverpool, every evening at 7.0; Oxford, daily, at 7.0 a.m.; Portsmouth and Southampton, every afternoon, at 4.0; Plymouth and Exeter, every morning, at 8; Birmingham, Manchester and Liverpool, daily, at 6.0 a.m.; Portsmouth and Southampton, by the 'Rocket,' at 7.0 a.m.; Gloster, Birmingham, Liverpool, Manchester, and Holyhead leaves Bristol each day at 7.0 a.m."

On July 1, 1826, the " Hero " coach is quoted





(From "Stage Coach and Mail." By permission of Mr. C. G. Harper.

HOW THE MAILS WERE CONVEYED TO BRISTOL IN THE DAYS OF KING GEORGE THE FOURTH.



as performing the journey from Bristol to Birmingham in twelve hours.

On January 21, 1826:—"From Wood's Office, Bell Yard, Thomas Street, Bristol. Coaches. The 'London Shamrock,' light post-coach, five o'clock every evening; arrives in London at half-past seven next morning. Runs to the Spread Eagle Inn, Gracechurch Street, and Bull Inn, Aldgate.

"'London Chronometer.' Cheap coach. Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday, twelve o'clock. Fare: inside, 21s.; outside, 10s. 6d. Runs to Gerrard's Hall, Basing Lane, Cheapside.

"Exeter, Plymouth, Devonport, Totnes, Newton-Bushel, Ashburton, Tiverton, Wellington, Taunton, and Bridgwater. 'Royal Devon' Coach, every afternoon at four o'clock.

"Bath. Every morning, at eight, ten, and twelve o'clock, and at five in the evening."

January 21, 1826:—"Plume of Feathers, General Coach Office, Wine Street, Bristol. W. Clift takes the present opportunity to return his sincere thanks to the public for the preference they have given to his coaches; and begs to



inform them that the ' Traveller ' coach, to Exeter, is this day removed from Congdon's Hotel to the Old London Inn, and leaves there for Bristol every evening, at half-past five, and arrives at Bristol at half-past five in the morning, in time for the coaches to Gloucester, Cheltenham, Worcester, Birmingham, Liverpool, Manchester, Holyhead, and all parts of the North; leaves Bristol at seven every morning, proceeds through Bridgwater, Taunton and Tiverton, and arrives at Exeter at six the same evening.

" The proprietors, for the better accommodation of their friends, have declined the conveyance of fish by this coach, and pledge themselves that no pains shall be wanting to render it the most comfortable as well as the most expeditious coach on the road.

" Four-inside coaches to all parts of England daily. Performed by Clift, Pratt and Co."

Saturday, December 30, 1826 :—" We are informed that memorials to the Lords of the Treasury and to the General Post Office, to establish a mail-coach from Cheltenham, through Tewkesbury, over the Tewkesbury Severn Bridge to Ledbury,





and from thence to Hereford, are now in course of signature through the neighbourhood connected with that line of road. The advantages of such an arrangement will be most important, as it will give to the inhabitants of that city two hours to answer, on the same day, letters received in the morning from London, Bristol, Birmingham, and all parts of the North and West, and also from Scotland and from all parts of the north of Ireland. Should this object be attained, the intended new mail will bring the London letters for Hereford from Cheltenham on the arrival there of the Gloucester mail; and the present Bristol and Birmingham mails will leave the Ledbury and Hereford letters at Tewkesbury, instead of at Worcester, as now done."

October 13, 1827:—"Royal Mail and General Coach Office, Bush Tavern, Corn Street, Bristol. New mails to Exeter, Plymouth and Barnstaple. The public are respectfully informed that the Royal mail will in future leave the Bush coach office daily, nine a.m., via Bridgwater, Taunton, Wellington, Collumpton, and arrive in Exeter six p.m., leaving for Plymouth six-thirty p.m.



and arriving there eleven p.m. 'same night,' making the journey, Bristol to Plymouth, in 'only fourteen hours.'

"Also Royal mail to Barnstaple, daily, nine-thirty a.m., via Taunton, Wiveliscombe, Bampton and South Molton.

"Each mail will arrive at Bristol at five p.m., in time for the London mail at five-twenty p.m., and of the 'Sovereign' four-inside coach to London six p.m."

April 21, 1832 :—"From the Bush Coach Office, the day coach, the 'Regulator,' daily (except Sundays) at six-thirty p.m., and arrives at the White Horse Cellars, Piccadilly, and the Bull and Mouth, St. Martin's-le-Grand, precisely at eight o'clock."

"The Weston-super-Mare coach, the 'Magnet,' left Weston nine a.m., and on return left the Bush three-forty-five p.m., through Congresbury, Cleeve, and Backwell.

"The 'Hope' left Weston-super-Mare on Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday at eight-thirty a.m., and returned from the Plume of Feathers at four-thirty p.m. same day."



[*By permission of Mr. F. E. Baines, C.B.* *From "On the Track of the Mail Coach."*

THE BRISTOL, BATH AND LONDON COACH TAKING UP MAILS WITHOUT HALTING.





" Royal mail to Portsmouth, daily, five-fifteen p.m., return journey, Portsmouth seven p.m., arrive White Lion eight-thirty next day."

In 1830, the " Bull and Mouth " in St. Martin's-le-Grand, was a great coach rendezvous. A strong and penetrating aroma of horses and straw pervaded its neighbourhood, in Bull-and-Mouth Street.

The Gloucester and Aberystwyth mail-coach continued to run until the year 1854, and it is believed that was the last regular main road mail-coach which was kept on the road. Its guard from 1836 to its abolition in 1854 was Moses James Nobbs.

The London mail coaches of the period loaded up at about half-past seven at their respective inns, and then assembled at the Post Office yard in St. Martin's-le-Grand to receive the bags. All, that is to say, except seven coaches carrying West of England mails—the Bath, Bristol, Devonport, Exeter, Gloucester, Southampton, and Stroud —which started from Piccadilly.

A contemporary writer said :—" Wonderful building, the new General Post Office, opened



in 1829, nearly opposite. They say the Government has got something very like a white elephant in that vast pile. A great deal too big for present needs, or, indeed, for any possible extension of Post Office business."

And yet, in the 75 years which have elapsed two other Post Offices of equal size have been built near it, and acres of ground at Mount Pleasant—a mile off—have been covered with buildings for Post Office purposes!



THE GENERAL POST OFFICE, ST. MARTIN'S-LE-GRAND, LONDON, IN 1830.







CHAPTER VII.

THE BRISTOL AND PORTSMOUTH MAIL FROM 1772 ONWARDS. —PROJECTED SOUTH COAST RAILWAY FROM BRISTOL, 1903. —THE BRISTOL TO SALISBURY POST BOY HELD UP.—MAIL COACH ACCIDENTS.—LUKE KENT AND RICHARD GRIFFITHS, THE MAIL GUARDS.

IN 1903, in connection with a projected new railway from Bristol to Basingstoke the promoters made a strong point of the fact that the letters for the first delivery in the important South Coast towns, such as Portsmouth and Southampton, could not be posted quite so late in Bristol then as could those which were carried in the olden days by the mail coaches throughout.

A deputation, consisting of Mr. John Mardon, Mr. Sidney Humphries, Mr. Bolt, and Mr. H. J. Spear (Secretary), representing the Chamber of Commerce and Shipping, waited on the Post-master-General, at the House of Commons, London, respecting the imperfect service, and they did not fail to point out to him (Mr. Austen Chamberlain)



the time-table of the old mail coach by way of contrast with the present service by railway.

Mr. Austen Chamberlain, replying to the deputation, said that, as regarded the mail arrangements, he thought he had no need to show them that he recognised the importance of Bristol as a great commercial centre, or how largely recent developments had increased that importance. He was also alive to the necessity of prompt means of communication, but he was not wholly his own master. They had complained that the train service to the South and South-Eastern Counties was very inconvenient. That, unfortunately, was the only means of communication upon which he had to rely. If they had been able to put before him trains which he did not use for the transmission of mails, he might have been able to provide facilities. With the existing train facilities the Post Office business was conducted as well as it could be conducted. That being so, there was no way by which he could improve that service, except by requiring of the companies concerned that they should provide a special train for Post Office purposes.



He was afraid that trains run at the hours which would be necessary to meet their wishes would not secure much passenger traffic, and the whole cost of the running would fall upon the Postmaster-General. He would closely watch the matter, and if he could see his way he would not be reluctant to provide them with what they desired. At present the service was the best in his power to afford. They were probably aware that the Post Office was experimenting in certain places with motor-cars, and if they were found to be reliable, that might be a way out of the difficulty: He should keep that before him as a possibility, if further railway facilities were not forthcoming: He regretted that he could not make a more hopeful statement. All he could say was that he did not think the service was satisfactory for a great commercial centre like Bristol, and if he saw his way to provide them with something better he would certainly not neglect to do so.

It may be opportune here to recall the mail services of the past.

From an "Account of the Days and Hours of the Post coming in and going out at Salisbury,"



the following has been gleaned. The "Account" is a broad sheet, and was printed in Salisbury in 1772 by Sully and Alexander. The name of Daniel P. Safe, postmaster, is inscribed at the foot of the "Account":—

Comes in from Bristol through Bath, Bradford, Trowbridge, Devizes, Westbury, Warminster, Heytesbury, Wells, Shepton Mallet, Frome, etc., etc., Monday about Seven at Night; and Wednesday and Friday, about Three in the Afternoon.

Goes out to Heytesbury, Westbury, Devizes, Trowbridge, Bradford, Bath. Bristol, Warminster, Frome, Shepton Mallet, Wells, etc., etc., Sunday at Ten at Night; and Wednesday and Friday at Six in the Evening.

Comes in from Portsmouth, Gosport, Isle of Wight, Guernsey, Jersey, Southampton, New Forest, Winton, Romsey, on Sunday, Wednesday and Friday, at Six in the Evening.

Goes out to Romsey, Winton, New Forest, Southampton, Guernsey, Jersey, Isle of Wight, Gosport, Portsmouth, on Sunday, Tuesday, and Thursday at Eleven in the Morning.



The official bag seal of the period was inscribed thus :—



The Bristol and Portsmouth Mail Coach was established under the immediate superintendence of Francis Freeling, Secretary to the General Post Office, who travelled on the coach on its first journey about the year 1786.

In the year 1793 the Salisbury, Portsmouth, and Chichester mails went out from Bristol every morning at seven, and arrived in Bristol every evening between nine and eleven. At that period the coaches from Bristol for the Southern Counties started thus :—Bush Tavern, Corn Street, John Weeks ; for Weymouth a post coach every Monday, Wednesday, and Friday morning at 5 ; for Portsmouth a post coach every Tuesday, Thursday, and Saturday morning at four, so that probably the mail which left at 7 a.m. daily was carried by mail cart and postboy.

In about the year 1798 a " long " coach set out from Mr. Crosse's, the Crown Inn, Portsmouth, to Southampton, Salisbury, Bath, and Bristol, every Monday, Wednesday, and Friday



afternoon; and from Gosport every Tuesday, Thursday, and Saturday, to the White Hart Inn, Bristol.

The methods of service in 1798 and the perils of the road are indicated by the following public notice, viz. :—

"General Post Office,

"October 11th, 1798.

"The postboy carrying the mail from Bristol to Salisbury on the 9th instant was stopped between the hours of eleven and twelve o'clock at night by two men on foot within six miles of Salisbury, who robbed him of seven shillings in money, but did not offer to take the mail. Whoever shall apprehend the culprit, or cause to be apprehended and convicted both or either of the persons who committed this robbery, will be entitled to a reward of fifty pounds over and above the reward given by Act of Parliament for apprehending highwaymen. If either party will surrender himself and discover his accomplice he will be admitted as evidence for the Crown, receive His Majesty's most gracious pardon, and be entitled to the said reward.

"By command of the Postmaster-General,

"FRANCIS FREELING, Secretary."



There is no record that anyone claimed the reward.

In 1828 the mail went out from Bristol at twenty minutes past five o'clock for Salisbury, Southampton, Portsmouth, and Chichester, and arrived every day previously to the London mail —thus Chichester, in Sussex, was linked up with the Wiltshire, Dorsetshire, and Hampshire mails at that early period. The charge for the postage of a letter from Bristol to Portsmouth was at that time ninepence.

Luke Kent was the first individual who filled the place of Guard of the Chichester mail coaches. At his death he left a sum of money, on the condition of the Mail Guard always blowing the horn when he passed the place of his interment, Farlington Church, near Havant.

Prior to becoming a Mail Guard, Luke Kent kept the turnpike gate at Post Bridge, and afterwards became landlord of the Goat public house, where he amassed a good fortune. He then opened the Sadler's Wells and was assisted by James Perry, the most celebrated mimic of his time, who assumed the name of Rossignal. He



was accustomed to procure a variety of birds, and, having first given his excellent imitation of the songs of each, to let them loose amongst the audience, to their no small gratification. The scheme failed.

In June, 1804, one of the Portsmouth night coaches, having six inside and fifteen outside passengers, besides a surplus of luggage, was overturned near Godalming, Surrey. Twelve of the passengers sustained considerable hurt, and nine were obliged to be left behind; the lives of two children were said to be despaired of. "We are astonished at the temerity of the public in trusting themselves to such vehicles."

A Time Bill of 1823, which gives details of a Coach Service at that period, appears on page 83.

In 1826, a coachman on this road was accused of imperilling his passengers through having imbibed too freely, and the Mail Guard was called on in the following letter to report on the matter:—

"General Post Office, 29th July, 1826. Sir,—The passengers who travelled with the Portsmouth and Bristol mail on the 26th instant,

GENERAL POST-OFFICE.

THE EARL OF CHICHESTER AND THE MARQUESS OF SALISBURY, HIS MAJESTY'S POSTMASTERS-GENERAL.

PORTSMOUTH AND BRISTOL:

Contractors' Names.	Number of Passengers. In.	Out.	Miles.	Time allowed. H.	M.	
						Dispatched from the Post Office, Portsmouth, 1823, at 7.20, 22nd March.
						by Clock.
						Coach No. 240 sent out { With a Time-Piece safe. No. 69 to Devonshire.
Rogers	4	4	9	1	10	Arrived at Fareham, at 8.30.
Rogers	4	4	12½	1	50	Arrived at Southampton, at 10.20.
					10	Ten Minutes allowed for Office Duty.
Rogers	3	4	8	1	5	Arrived at Rumsey, at 11.35.
Weeks	3	4	16	2	20	Arrived at Salisbury, at 1.55.
					10	Ten Minutes allowed for Office Duty.
Hilliar	1	1	22	3	0	Arrived at Warminster, at 5.5.
Pickwick	1	1	8	1	5	Arrived at Beckington, at 6.10.
	1	1	10	1	40	Arrived at Bath, at 7.50.
					10	Ten Minutes allowed for Office Duty.
	1	2	13½	1	40	Arrived at the Post-Office, Bristol, the 23 of March,
			99	14	20	1823, at 9.40 by Time-Piece
						at 9.40 by Clock.
						Devonshire.
						Coach No. 240 arrived { Delivered the Time-Piece safe. No. 69 to Office.
						Thomas Cole.

The Time of working each Stage is to be reckoned from the Coach's Arrival, and as any Time lost, is to be recovered in the course of the Stage, it is the Coachman's Duty to be as expeditious as possible, and to report the Horse-keepers if they are not always ready when the Coach arrives, and active in getting it off. The Guard is to give his best assistance in changing, whenever his Official Duties do not prevent it.

By Command of the Postmasters-General,

CHARLES JOHNSON,

Surveyor and Superintendent.

November, 1822.——250.





having complained that the coachman who drove on that day from Bristol to Warminster was drunk and unfit to drive I have to desire you will explain the reason why you neglected to report to me so great and so disgraceful an irregularity, and also how it happened that you did not know the coachman's name when the passengers asked you for it. I am, sir, yours, etc.,
C. JOHNSON.—Mr. Folwell, Mail Guard, Bristol."

The explanation is not forthcoming.

In 1830, many of the public coaches started from Portsmouth and passed through Portsea and Landport, but—

> "In olden time two days were spent
> 'Twixt Portsmouth and the Monument;
> When flying Diligences plied,
> When men in Roundabouts would ride
> And, at the surly driver's will,
> Get out and climb each tedious hill.
> But since the rapid Freeling's age,
> How much improved the English stage,
> Now in eight hours with ease, the post
> Reaches from Newgate Street our coast."

In the years 1837 and 1838 the Portsmouth mail coach was despatched at 7.5 p.m.; from Bristol Post Office—then located at the corner of



Exchange Avenue. The posting of letters without fee was allowed up to 6.35 p.m., and, with fee, paid and unpaid letters alike up to 6.50 p.m. The coach started from the White Lion coach office, Broad Street, at 6.45 p.m., so as to be in readiness at the Post Office to take up the mails at the appointed time. The arrival of the mail at Portsmouth from Bristol was at 6.45 a.m. These times are an improvement upon the service in operation in 1836. At that time the coach left Bristol at 5.30 p.m., with a posting up to 5.0 p.m. without fee, and with fees paid, up to 5.15 p.m. On the inward journey the Coach did not arrive until 8.9 a.m.

It will be appropriate here to enumerate certain interesting incidents connected with the carrying on of the Mail Coach system.

On Saturday, Jan. 5, 1805, the London Mail of Friday se'nnight, had not arrived at Swansea where it was due early in the morning, till eleven o'clock that night, having been detained seven teen hours at the New Passage, in consequence of such large shoals of ice floating down the Severn as to render it unsafe for the mail boat to cross until Friday morning.



Thursday se'nnight, an inquest was held at Swansea on the body of John Paul, driver of the mail coach between that place and Caermarthen which on Sunday was overturned about two miles from Swansea, while proceeding with great rapidity down a hill, it being supposed the coachman's hands were so benumbed with cold that he could not restrain the horses' speed, the consequence of which was that he was so much bruised as to occasion his death on Wednesday night. The guard was slightly hurt, but the passengers escaped uninjured. Verdict, accidental death.

Very few details exist of that exceptional season, in 1806, when Nevill, a guard on the Bristol mail, was frozen to death; but the records of the great snowstorm that began on the Christmas night of 1836 are more copious.

A valuable reminiscence of that night—Dec. 27, 1836—is Pollard's graphic picture of the Devonport mail snowed up at Amesbury. Six horses could not move it, and Guard F. Feecham was in parlous plight. Pollard's companion picture of the Liverpool mail in the snow near St. Alban's



on the same night is equally interesting. Guard James Burdett fared little better than his comrade on the Devonport mail.

"An accident occurred to the Worcester mail coach on Friday evening, March 27, 1829, opposite the Bull and Mouth Office, in Piccadilly, which, we are sorry to say, has proved fatal to Turner, the coachman. Just as Turner had taken hold of the reins, and while he was wrapping a large coat over his knees, the leaders started, and, turning sharply to the right, dashed one of the fore-wheels against a post. The shock was so violent that the coachman was flung from his seat. He fell on his back, and his neck came violently against the curb-stone. Not a moment was lost in securing the assistance of a surgeon, by whom he was bled. The poor man was shortly removed to St. George's Hospital, where he died at about eight o'clock on Saturday evening. He left a wife and three infant children in a state of destitution, without even the means of buying a coffin."

As a "Caution to Mail Coachmen," the following notice was issued on June 20, 1829:—"On



Friday, Thomas Moor, the driver of the London mail from Bristol to Calne and back, appeared before the Magistrates at Brislington to answer an information laid against him by Mr. Bull, the Inspector of Mail Coaches, by order of the G.P.O: for giving up the reins to an outside passenger, and permitting him to drive the mail, on May 29 last, from Keynsham to Bath, against the remonstrances of the guard. The magistrates convicted Moor in the mitigated penalty of £5 and 11s. costs. Mr. Bull presented the Bath Hospital with the amount of the fine."

On September 8th, 1837, a coachman named Burnett was killed at Speenhamland, on the Bath Road. He was driving one of the New Company's London and Bristol stages, and alighted at the "Hare and Hounds," very foolishly leaving the horses unattended, with reins on their backs. He had been a coachman for 20 years, but experience had not been sufficient to prevent him thus breaking one of the first rules of the profession. He had no sooner entered the Inn than the rival Old Company's coach came down the road. Whether the other coachman gave the



horses a touch with his whip as he passed, or if they started of their own accord, is not known, but they did start, and Burnett, rushing out to stop them, was thrown down and trampled on, so that he died.

There departed this life at Bristol, in November, 1904, a somewhat notable individual in the person of Richard Griffiths, who was born at Westminster, in the year 1811, and entered the service of the Post Office as a Mail Guard on the 17th November, 1834. At the commencement of his service he was employed as Guard to the London and Norwich, *via* Newmarket Mail Coach, upon which duty he remained until the coach ceased running on the 5th January, 1846, when he was transferred to the London and Dover Railway, and acted as Mail Train Guard thereon: When a Travelling Post Office was established in 1860 on the Dover line of railway, and the necessity for a Guard to the Mail bags thus removed, Griffiths was ordered to the South Wales Railway, where he remained as Mail Train Guard until superannuated on the 25th August, 1870. He lived at Eastville, in Bristol, under the care at



last of Mrs. Barrett, a kind old dame, who made him very comfortable, and on his demise, after being on pension for 34 years, he bequeathed his old battered Mail Coach horn to her (*see illustration*). It is probable that the horn was used on the last Norwich Coach out of London. The maker's name on it is "J. A. Turner, 19 Poultry."

On November 9, 1822, attention was drawn to the "Musical Coachman" thus:—"The blowing of the horn by the coachman and guards of our mail-coaches has usually been considered a sort of nuisance: now, by the persevering labours of these ingenious gentlemen, converted into an instrument of public gratification. Most of the guards of the stage-coaches now make their entrance and exit to the tune of some old national ballad, which, though it may not, perhaps, be played at present in such exact time and tune as would satisfy the leader of the opera band, is yet pleasant in comparison to the unmeaning and discordant strains which formerly issued from the same quarter."

April, 1832:—"The Tipsy Member" finds





AN OLD MAIL COACH GUARD'S POST HORN.





mention thus: "An M.P. applied to the Post Office to know why some of his franks had been charged: The answer was, 'We supposed, sir, they were not your writing; the 'hand' is not 'the same.' 'Why, not precisely; but the truth is I happened to be a *little tipsy* when I wrote them.' 'Then, sir, you will be so good in future as to write 'drunk' when you make 'free.'"

In this book are depicted an old State Coach, the Mail Coach, the primitive Railway Train, and a Railway Engine of the latest pattern, all indicative of progress in locomotion. To complete the series, and for the purpose of historical record, subjoined is a picture of the first Motor vehicle used (1904–1905) in Bristol for the rapid transport of His Majesty's Mails by road. No doubt, in process of time, this handy little 5-horse power car, built to a Bristol Post Office design, to carry loads of 3½ cwt., and constructed by the Avon Motor Company, Keynsham, near Bristol, will have numerous fellow cars darting about in the roads and crowded thoroughfares of Bristol for the collection of letters and parcels in conjunc-

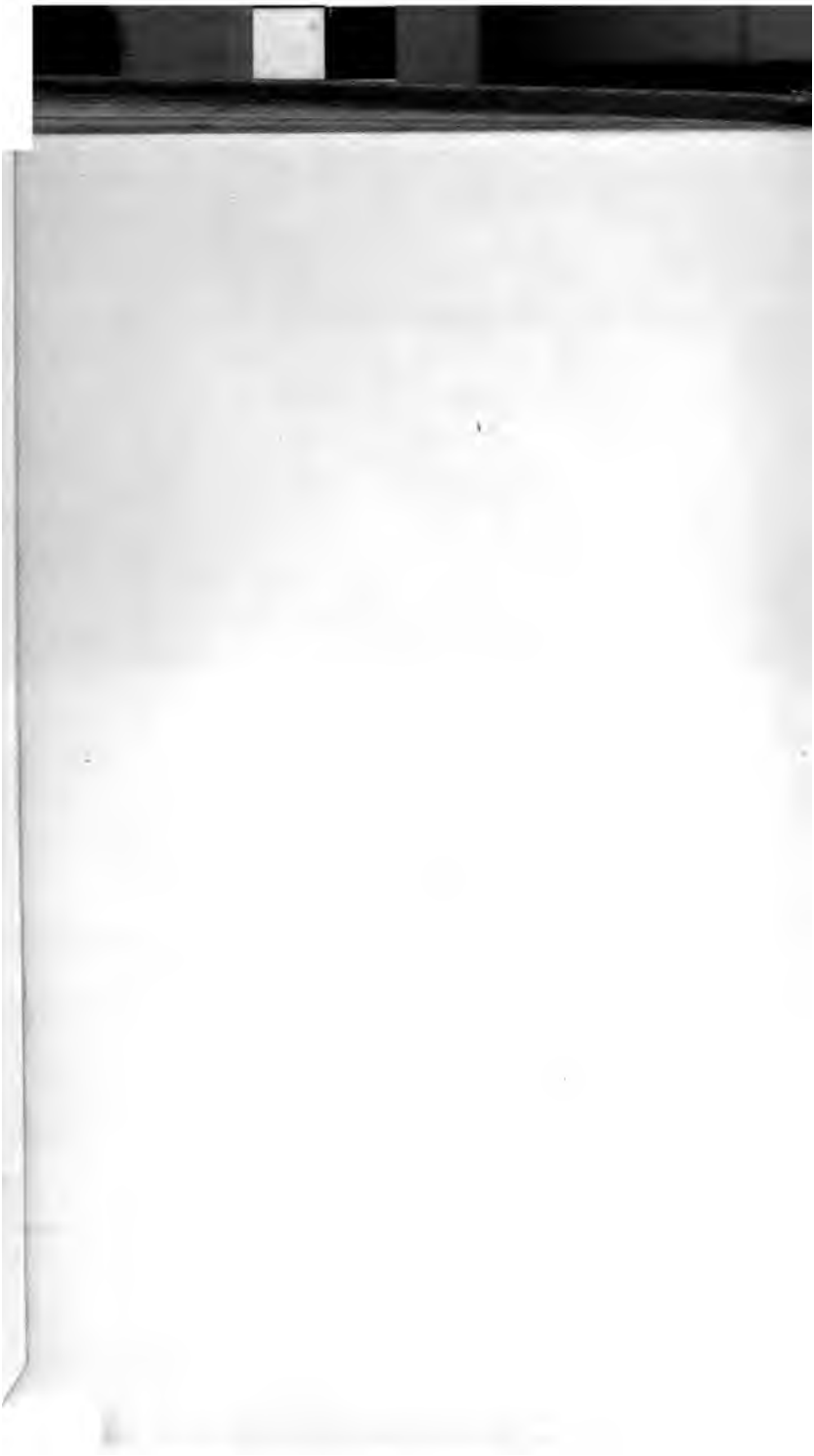


tion with larger cars of higher horse power to do the heavy station traffic and country road work.

Still, little "Mercury" will have the credit of being the pioneer car in the Bristol Post Office Service. During its trials the car did really useful service, and did not once break down.



THE "AVON" TRIMOBILE, USED BY THE BRISTOL POST OFFICE.





CHAPTER VIII.

THE BUSH TAVERN, BRISTOL'S FAMOUS COACHING INN, AND JOHN WEEKS, ITS WORTHY BONIFACE, 1775–1819.—THE WHITE LION COACHING HOUSE, BRISTOL, ISAAC NIBLETT.—THE WHITE HART, BATH.

IT appears that John Weeks was landlord of the Bush Tavern, Bristol, from 1775 to 1801, and continued to be a coach proprietor until 1806. In the Eastern cloister of Bristol Cathedral there is a mural tablet erected to his memory, with a well-executed medallion portrait of him in profile, with inscription as shown in the illustration.

Verger Sproule, of old time, who was born in the first year of the nineteenth century, once told Mr. Morgan, present senior lay clerk, that he well remembered John Weeks, and that the portrait on the tablet was an excellent likeness of him.

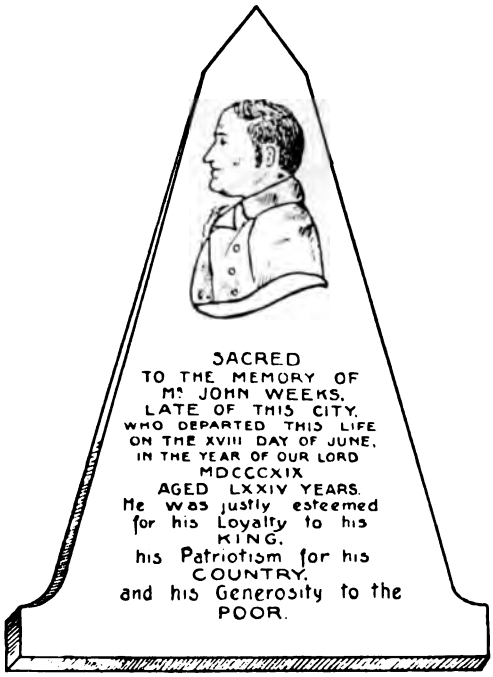
In "Mornings at Matlock," by Robey Skelton



Mackenzie, D.C.L., author of "Titian: an Art Novel" (London, Henry Colburn, publisher, 1850), a book which contains a collection of twenty-six short stories supposed to have been told by people stopping at Matlock, there is an interesting story relating to what was known as the Bush Guinea. Briefly told, Dr. Mackenzie's Bush Guinea story runs thus:—"It was the delight of this Boniface (John Weeks) on every Christmas Day, to cover the great table with a glorious load of roast beef and plum pudding, flanked most plenteously with double home-brewed of such mighty strength and glorious flavour that we might well have called it malt wine rather than malt liquor. At this table on that day every one who pleased was welcome to sit down and feast. Many to whom a good dinner was an object did so; and no nobler sight was there in Bristol, amidst all its wealth and hospitality, than that of honest John Weeks at the head of his table, lustily carving and pressing his guests to 'Eat, drink, and be merry.' Nor did his generosity content itself with this.

"It was the custom of the house and of the





MURAL TABLET IN BRISTOL CATHEDRAL.



day, when the repast was ended, that each person should go to honest John Weeks in the bar and there receive his cordial wishes for many happy returns of the genial season. They received something more, for according to their several necessities a small gift of money was pressed upon each. To one man a crown; to another, half-a-guinea; to a third, as more needing it a guinea. On the whole some twenty or thirty guineas were thus disbursed.

"On one particular year it had been noticed during the months of November and December, that a middle-aged man, whom no frequenter of the Bush Inn appeared to know, and who appeared to know no one, used to visit about noon every day, and calling for a sixpenny glass of brandy and water, sit over it until he had carefully gone through the perusal of the London paper of the previous evening. On Christmas Eve, honest John Weeks, anxious that the decayed gentleman should have one meal at least in the 'Bush,' delicately hinted that on the following day he kept open table. Punctually at one o'clock, being the appointed hour, he



appeared at the Bush in his usual seedy attire. John Weeks called his head waiter, a sagacious, well-powdered, steady man, to whom he confidently entrusted the donation which he had set aside for the decayed gentleman. The decayed gentleman quietly put it in his pocket, from which he drew a card. The inscription on the card was simply 'Thomas Coutts, 59, Strand.' Amongst the heirlooms which she most particularly prized, the late Duchess of St. Albans, widow of Thomas Coutts, used to show a coin richly mounted in a gorgeous bracelet, which coin bore the name of 'The Bush Guinea.'"

Numerous as the passengers were by the many coaches starting from the Bush Inn, yet evidently John Weeks was in the habit of finding enough food for them to eat, and the wherewithal to fortify themselves with, ere they set out on their long coach journeys. The Bill of Fare for the guests at that hostelry during the festive season of 1790 shows that our ancestors had an excellent conception of Christmas cheer. For variety and quantity it could not easily be surpassed, and in



these "degenerate" days could not even be equalled. But let it speak for itself.

CHRISTMAS, 1790.

One Turtle, weight 47lb.; 68 Pots Turtle; British Turtle Giblet Soup; Gravy Soup; Pea Soup; Soup and Bouille; Mutton Broth; Barley Broth; 4 Turbots; 7 Cod; 2 Brills; 2 Pipers; 12 Dories; 2 Haddocks; 14 Rock Fiſh; 18 Carp; 16 Perch; 2 Salmon; 12 Plaice; 164 Herrings; Sprats; Soles; 22 Eels; Salt Fiſh. Doe VENISON: 10 Haunches, 10 Necks, 10 Breasts, 10 Shoulders; 37 Hares; 14 Pheaſants; Grouſe; 32 Partridges; 94 Wild Ducks; Wild Geeſe; 32 Teal; 27 Wigeon; 6 Bald Cootes; 1 Sea Pheasant; 3 Mews; 4 Moor Hens; 2 Water Dabs; 2 Curlews; Bittern; 61 Wood Cocks; 49 Snipes; 7 Wild Turkies; 8 Golden Plovers; 5 Quiſt; 2 Land Rails; 13 Galenas; 4 Pea Hens; 26 Pigeons; 121 Larks; 26 Stares; 108 Small Birds; 44 Turkies; 8 Capons; 9 Ducks; 5 Geeſe; 63 Chicken; 4 Ducklins; 18 Rabbits; 3 Pork Griſkins; 11 Veal Burrs; 1 Roaſting Pig; Oysters, Stewed and Scolloped; Eggs; Hogs Puddings; Ragood Feet and Ears; Scotch Collops; Veal Cutlets; Harricoad Mutton; Maintenon Chops; Pork Chops; Mutton Chops; Rump Steaks; Joint Steaks; Sauſages; Hambro' Sauſages; Tripe; Cow Heel; Notlings; 3 Houſe Lambs. VEAL: 5 Legs, 2 Loins, 1 Breaſt, 4 Calves' Heads. BEEF: 5 Rumps, 1 Sirloin, 5 Ribs, 1 Pinbone, Duch Beef, Hambro' Beef. MUTTON: 16 Haunches, 8 Necks, 8 Legs, 11 Loins, 6 Saddles, 6 Chines, 5 Shoulders. PORK: 4 Loins, 2 Legs, 2 Chines, 2 Spare-Ribs, 1 Porker. COLD: Boar's-Head; Baron Beef, 3 c. 1 qr.; 6 Hams; 4 Tongues; 6 Chicken; Hogs Feet and Ears; 7 Collars Brawn; 2 Rounds Beef; Collard Veal and Mutton; Collard Eels and Pig's Head; Rein Deers' Tongues; Dutch Tongues; Harts Tongues; Bologna Tongues;



Paragne Pie; French Pies; Pigeon Pies; Veniſon Paſty; Sulks; 470 Minced Pies; 13 Tarts; 218 Jellies; 800 Craw Fiſh; Pickled Salmon; Sturgeon; Pickled Oyſters; Potted Partridges; Crabs; 24 Lobſters; 52 Barrels Pyfleet and Colchester Oysters; Milford and Tenby Oysters; Pines.

So far as can be ascertained, Matthew Stretch kept the tavern from 1801 to 1805, and James Anderson in 1805 and 1806. Mr. John Townsend was "mine host" from 1807 until 1826. Unfortunately, none of his descendants possess a portrait of him. Mr. Charles Townsend, of St. Mary's, Stoke Bishop, Bristol, has in his possession the original lease, in which the Bush Tavern in Corn Street was transferred, on the 18th December, 1806, from Mr. John Weeks, wine merchant, on the one part, to Mr. John Townsend on the other part, at a yearly rental of £395 of lawful money of the United Kingdom —the term to be for fourteen years. The stables and coach houses "of him, the said John Weeks," situated in Wine Street, were included in the transfer. Out of the rental the yearly sum of £20 had to be paid by the owner, John Weeks, to the parish of St. Ewen, for that part of the coffee house which stood in the said parish.



As showing how John Weeks safeguarded his monopoly of coach-running to and from the Bush Tavern, there was this stipulation in the lease :—" The said John Townsend shall and will from time to time and at all times during the continuance of this demise take in and receive at the said Tavern, hereby demised, all and every Stage Coach or Public Carriage which shall belong to the said John Weeks at any time during this term, under the penalty of Two thousand Pounds, and that he, the said John Townsend, shall not nor will at any time during the said Term, if the said John Weeks shall so long run carriages of the aforesaid description, take in at the said Tavern or Coffee Room any Public Stage Coach or by way of evasion any Public Carriage whatsoever used as a public stage belonging to any person or persons whomsoever without the consent and approbation of the said John Weeks &c. in writing for that purpose first had and obtained under the penalty of two thousand pounds to be paid for any default in the observance and performance of the covenants herein before contained in that behalf."



According to Paterson's "Roads," John Weeks in 1794 occupied a homestead called "The Rodney," at Filton Hay, 4 miles from Bristol on the Bristol to Tewkesbury Road.

The following advertisement from a very old newspaper will be interesting as indicative that in addition to the John Weeks, of Bush Inn fame, Bristol, there was at the Portsmouth end of the Mail Coach route another worthy of the same name, likewise engaged in the carrying trade, but by sea instead of land:—"John Weeks, Master of the Duke of Gloster Sloop, takes this method to thank his friends and the public for their past favours in the Southampton and Portsmouth passage trade, and hopes for a continuance of the same, as they may depend on his care, and the time of sailing more regular than for many years past. He sails from Southampton every Monday, Wednesday, and Friday, and returns every Tuesday, Thursday, and Saturday, wind and weather permitting."

In the *Bristol Journal* of Saturday, July 28, 1804, "James Anderson (who kept the Lamb Inn, Broadmead, eleven years), begged to inform



his old friends and the public in general that he has taken the Bush Inn, Tavern, and Coffee-house, facing the Exchange, Bristol," where he hoped, by constant attention, reasonable charges, &c., to render everything agreeable and convenient to those who might kindly give a preference to his house. There had evidently been some friction at the Bush under the late management, for Mr. Anderson also intimated that " those gentlemen who withdrew from the Bush Coffee-room (upon Huntley's leaving it) are solicited to use it, gratis, until Christmas next."

In an advertisement following the above, John Weeks solicited support to his new tenant at the Bush, and added—" In the case of large dinners, or other public occasions, John Weeks will assist Mr. Anderson to give satisfaction."

On the site of the ' Bush,' the head offices of the late West of England and South Wales District Bank were erected. The directors of the Bristol and West of England Bank purchased the premises on December 31st, 1880. Lloyd's Bank now stands on the site.

The White Lion, Bristol, was one of the most



famous coaching houses in England, east, west, north, or south. It stood in Broad Street, a thoroughfare which belied its name as regards breadth, and could only be considered broad by comparison with the even narrower Small Street, which ran parallel with it. Yet at one time there were as many coaches passing in and out of Broad Street as any street in Bristol, or even in London!

That the White Lion had attained a venerable age may be judged from the fact that it is mentioned in a list of old Bristol inns and taverns, published in 1606. On May 10, 1610, the Duke of Brunswick visited Bristol, and took up his quarters at this house. In 1621 the Earl of Essex, and in more modern times, the Grand Duke Constantine of Russia, lodged there. The father of Sir Thomas Lawrence was host of the White Lion before he removed to the Bear Inn, Devizes. In 1684, it appears to have been the occasional hostelry of a Duke of Beaufort, for in that year, during Monmouth's rebellion, His Grace of Badminton was in Bristol, where he commanded several regiments of militia



against the insurgents; and on that occasion "the backward stables of the White Lion, in Brode Street, were set on fire, and therein were burnt to death two of the Duke of Beaufort's best saddle horses. It was supposed to have been done by the malice and envy of the fanaticks, of whom a great many were sent prisoners from Bristol to Gloucester, and there secured till the rebellion was over."

In Matthew's "New History or Complete Guide to Bristol" for the year 1793, there are the following entries respecting this erstwhile great coaching establishment:—

WHITE LION, BROAD STREET.—Thomas Luce proprietor. To London: A coach in two days sets out on Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Saturdays at seven o'clock in the morning.

WHITE HART INN, BROAD STREET.—(The White Hart adjoined the White Lion, and was a distinct hostelry so far back as 1606.) George Poston: To London: A coach in one day every morning at four o'clock. To Birmingham: A coach every morning (Sundays excepted) at four o'clock, also a mail coach every evening at seven o'clock. To



Gloucester: A coach every morning at eight o'clock: To Exeter: A coach every Monday, Wednesday, and Friday morning at six. To Bath: A coach every morning at nine o'clock and four in the afternoon.

The *Bristol Mirror* made announcements touching the White Lion thus:—"March 10, 1804: Wonderful cheap travelling. Fare inside 10s. 6d., outside 8s. The public are respectfully informed that coaches set out every Tuesday and Thursday and Saturday morning from the White Lion and White Hart, John Turner, Landlord, and arrive at Birmingham the same evening. Performed by Weeks, Poston & Co.

"November 8, 1823. J. Niblett, White Lion, Broad Street, announces change of Royal Mail coach route to London and back. The Emerald Post coach would run *via* Bath, Devizes, Marlborough, and Maidenhead. £1 18s. inside, 16s. outside.

"April 12, 1832: New Royal Mail coach to Bath daily at 7 a.m. Leaves York House, Bath, on return at 5 p.m. Arrives at White Lion, Bristol, at 6.30 p.m.



"April 21, 1832. Royal Mail to Liverpool every day at 5 p.m. from White Lion, Broad Street; arrive twelve noon the following day by way of Chepstow, Monmouth, Hereford, Shrewsbury, and Gloucester. Return journey Liverpool 5 p.m. Arrive White Lion 12 noon next day.

Mr. Isaac Niblett, who became proprietor of the White Lion Inn in 1823, in which year Thomas Luce gave up the place, was a well-known individual in the coaching world when the mail coach system was at its zenith. He worked 600 coach and post horses—a number only exceeded by the great London coach proprietor Chaplin, with his 1,300, and Horne and Sherman with their 700. Of the twenty-two daily coaches between Bristol and London the greater proportion made the White Lion their headquarters. Amongst other coaches with which Isaac Niblett was especially associated were the "Red Rover" and the "Exquisite." The "Red Rover" ran from Bristol to Brighton through Bath, over Salisbury Plain, on to Southampton and Chichester, and covered the distance of 140 miles in fourteen hours. The "Exquisite" used to run from Birmingham to Cheltenham,



thence on through Bristol to Exeter. In the *Bristol Directory and Gazette* of 1859, Mr. Niblett's innkeepership is alluded to thus :—" Isaac Niblett, White Lion and British Coffee House, family commercial and posting house; hearse and mourning coach proprietor." The White Hart, family and commerical hotel, Broad Street, was at that time kept by one Charles Smith.

Mr. Isaac Niblett, like John Weeks, of Bush Inn fame, had a country place near Bristol. He owned, and stayed from time to time at the Conigre House, Fylton. Mr. Niblett was for some time the owner of the old Bush Inn stables in Dolphin Street, according to evidence given in a recent trial before the Judge of Assize at Bristol. That site, as well as the Conigre Farm, Fylton, is, it is believed, still in the possession of his lineal descendants.

The Grand Hotel, one of the largest in the West of England, and most central in the city of Bristol, now stands on the sites of both the White Lion and the White Hart Hotels. Erected in 1869, it was known as the new White Lion until 1874, when its name was changed to that of the Grand





THE OLD WHITE LION COACHING INN, BROAD STREET, BRISTOL.



Hotel. The accompanying illustration of the White Lion and the White Hart Inns, taken from a lithograph engraving of about 1880 by the well-known Bristol firm of lithographers, Messrs: Lavars, must have been copied from a picture produced subsequent to the old coaching days, and, judging from the costumes of the pedestrians depicted, the period was probably about 1860, or a few years before the demolition of the old inns: The figure of a white hart appears in the picture over the entrance door of that hostelry but the statue of a white lion, which for very many years stood over the entrance gateway to the inn of that name, and which is recollected by many persons still living, was for some reason or other omitted from the engraving.

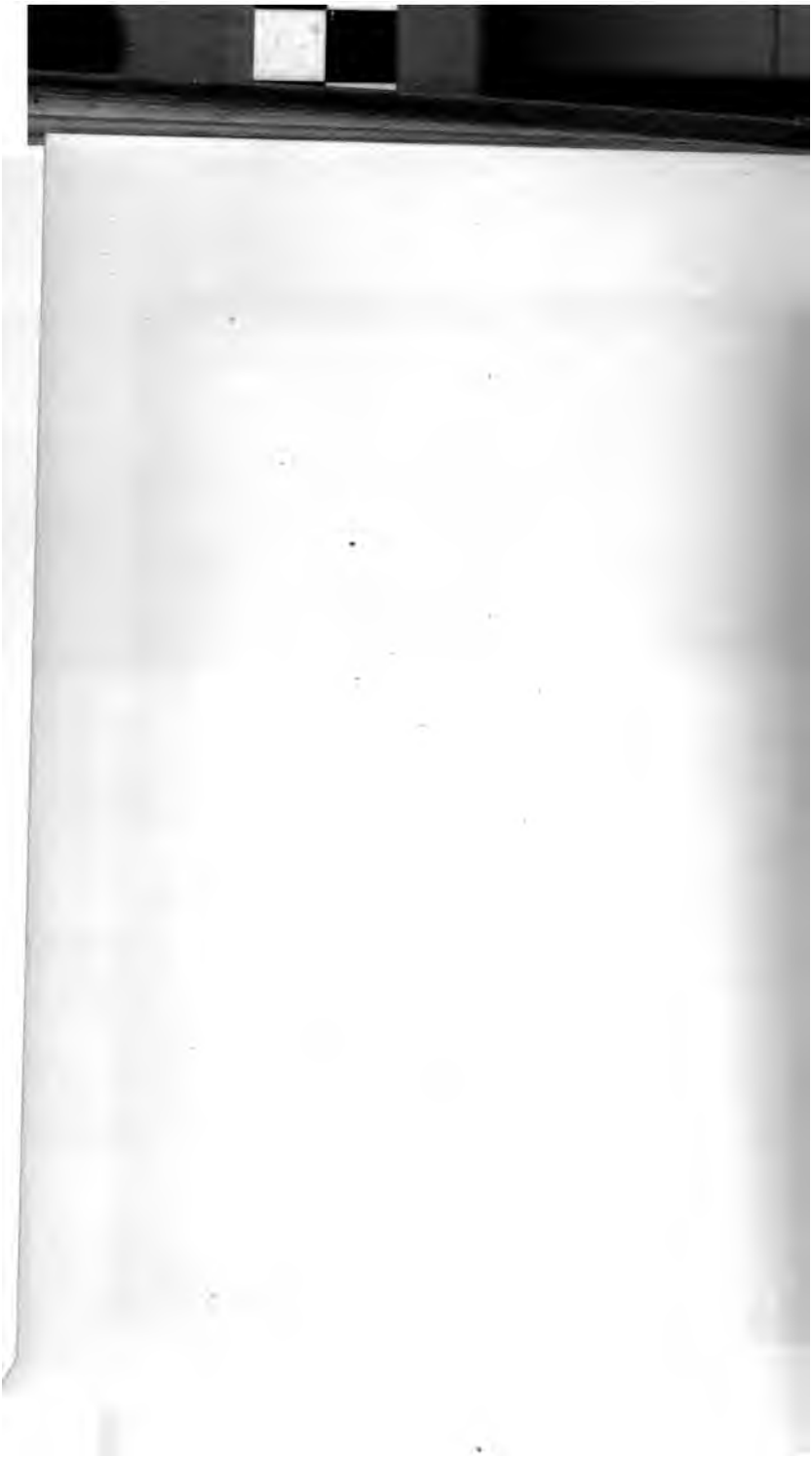
The White Lion appears to have been the leading Inn in the town in 1824, for on May 12 in that year the Mayor, Corporation, and leading citizens dined there on the occasion of the laying of the foundation stone of the Bristol Council House. Samuel Taylor Coleridge delivered lectures in the large room of the Inn in 1800. It was the " blue " house, and in later times the



coach which most frequently entered its narrow archway was driven by his Grace the sixth Duke of Beaufort, who put up at the inn on his visits to Bristol, as he had, it is said, a great respect for Isaac Niblett's sterling qualities and fine sporting instincts.

What an evolution in pleasure and commercial traffic has come about in the last three-quarters of a century! When the White Lion in Broad Street and the Bush Tavern in Corn Street were in their prime as Coaching Inns, a four-in-hand Coach in Bristol's narrow streets and on the neighbouring country roads was so often in evidence as scarcely to induce the pedestrian even to turn his head round to look at one in passing. Now such a patrician vehicle in Bristol's midst is brought down to an unit, and it is left to Mr. Stanley White, son of Sir George White, Bart., with his well-appointed Coach and his team of bright chestnuts, to link old Bristol with the traditions of past Coaching days. Strange that Mr. Stanley White should have blended in his one person the love of a coachman for a team with the will and nerve to render him one of Bristol's boldest and most expert drivers of







MR. STANLEY WHITE'S MOTOR CAR.





the road machine of the latest kind, to wit: the Motor Car.

At a function in Bath in 1902, described in these pages, Colonel Palmer, a descendant of John Palmer, presented a small curiosity to the Corporation: Readers of Pickwick will remember that, when Mr. Pickwick was proceeding to Bath, Sam Weller discovered inside the coach the name of "Moses Pickwick," and wanted to fight the guard for what he considered an outrage on his master. Among John Palmer's papers was an old contract for the Bristol and Bath Mail Service, and one of the parties bore the name of Pickwick, and was the landlord of the White Hart Hotel at Bath. It was that contract which Colonel Palmer presented to the Corporation, as a memorial both of his grandfather and of Dickens.



CHAPTER IX:

TOLL GATES AND GATE-KEEPERS.

AS this book is devoted in great measure to the mail services of old time—which had to be carried on entirely by horse and rider or driver—allusion may fittingly be made to the toll gate system, which played its part in connection with mail vehicular transport.

Toll bars originated, it seems, so far back as the year 1267. They were at first placed on the outskirts of cities and market towns, and afterwards extended to the country generally. The tolls for coaches and post-chaises on a long journey were rather heavy, as the toll bars were put up at no great distances from each other: In the year 1766, Turnpike Trusts, taking advantage of Sabbatarian feeling, charged double rates on Sundays, but experienced travellers sometimes journeyed on that day, and submitted







BAGSTONE TURNPIKE GATE HOUSE.

GATE ABOLISHED ABOUT 1870.



to the double impost, to gain the advantage of avoiding highwaymen, who did not carry on their avocation on Sunday, but gave themselves up to riot, conviviality, or repose.

Coaches which carried H. Majesty's mails were exempted by Act of Parliament from paying tolls. The exemption of mail coaches from paying tolls, a relief provided by the Act of 25th George III., was really a continuation of the old policy, by which the postboys of an earlier age, riding on horseback, and carrying the mails on the pommel of the saddle, had always been exempt from toll, and the light mail carts of a later age were always exempted.

It was no great matter, one way or the other, with the Turnpike Trusts, Mr. C. G. Harper tells us in "The Mail and Stage Coach," for the posts were then few and far between, and the revenue almost nil; but the advent of numerous mail coaches, running constantly and carrying passengers, and yet contributing nothing to the maintenance of the roads, soon became a very real grievance to those Trusts situated on the route of the mails. In



1816 the various Turnpike Trusts approached Parliament for a redress of these disabilities.

Mail coaches continued, however, to go free until the end of the system, although from 1798 they had to pay toll in Ireland. In Scotland in 1813 an Act was passed repealing the exemption in that part of the kingdom. Pack horses were superseded by huge wagons on the busiest roads early in the eighteenth century. Over 5,000 Turnpike Acts for the improvement of local roads were passed during the years 1700 and 1770. At the latter part of this period, narrow wheels were penalised more heavily than broad wheels.

Lewis Levy was a prominent man in the days of Turnpike Trusts, as he was a farmer of Metropolitan turnpike tolls to the tune of half a million pounds a year!

The history of toll bars is not wanting in romance: "Blow up for the gate," would say the coachman to the guard, when drawing near to a "pike" in the darkness of night. Lustily might guard blow, but it did not always have the desired effect. "Gate, gate!" would shout



TURNPIKE GATE HOUSE ON CHARFIELD AND WOTTON-UNDER-EDGE ROAD.

GATE ABOLISHED 1880.





coachman and guard. Down would get guard and tootle-tootle impatiently. And out would shuffle in his loose slippers the "pike" keeper in a dazed condition from fatigue produced by frequent disturbances. As he opens the gate he is soundly rated by coachman and guard, and enjoined to leave the gate open for the next mail down, or he would have to pay a fine of 40s. to the Postmaster General, that being the penalty for not preserving an unobstructed way for H. Majesty's mails.

In the Bristol district toll bars were plentiful, and attempts were made to erect ornate little houses which should be pleasing to the eyes of travellers. That such attempts were not always unsuccessful, the picturesque toll-gate houses depicted in these pages will demonstrate.

In 1804, Sarah Rennison, widow of Thomas Rennison, advertised that she lately had the ladies' and gentlemen's cold baths, near Stokes Croft Turnpike, effectually cleaned. "These baths are supplied with water from a clear and ever-flowing spring, uncontaminated by anything whatever, as it flows from a clear and

limpid stream from its source to the pipes in the baths."

This turnpike, named the Stokes Croft Gate, stood on the turnpike way designated Horfield Road. The gate was erected across the lane leading from the said road to Rennison's Baths.

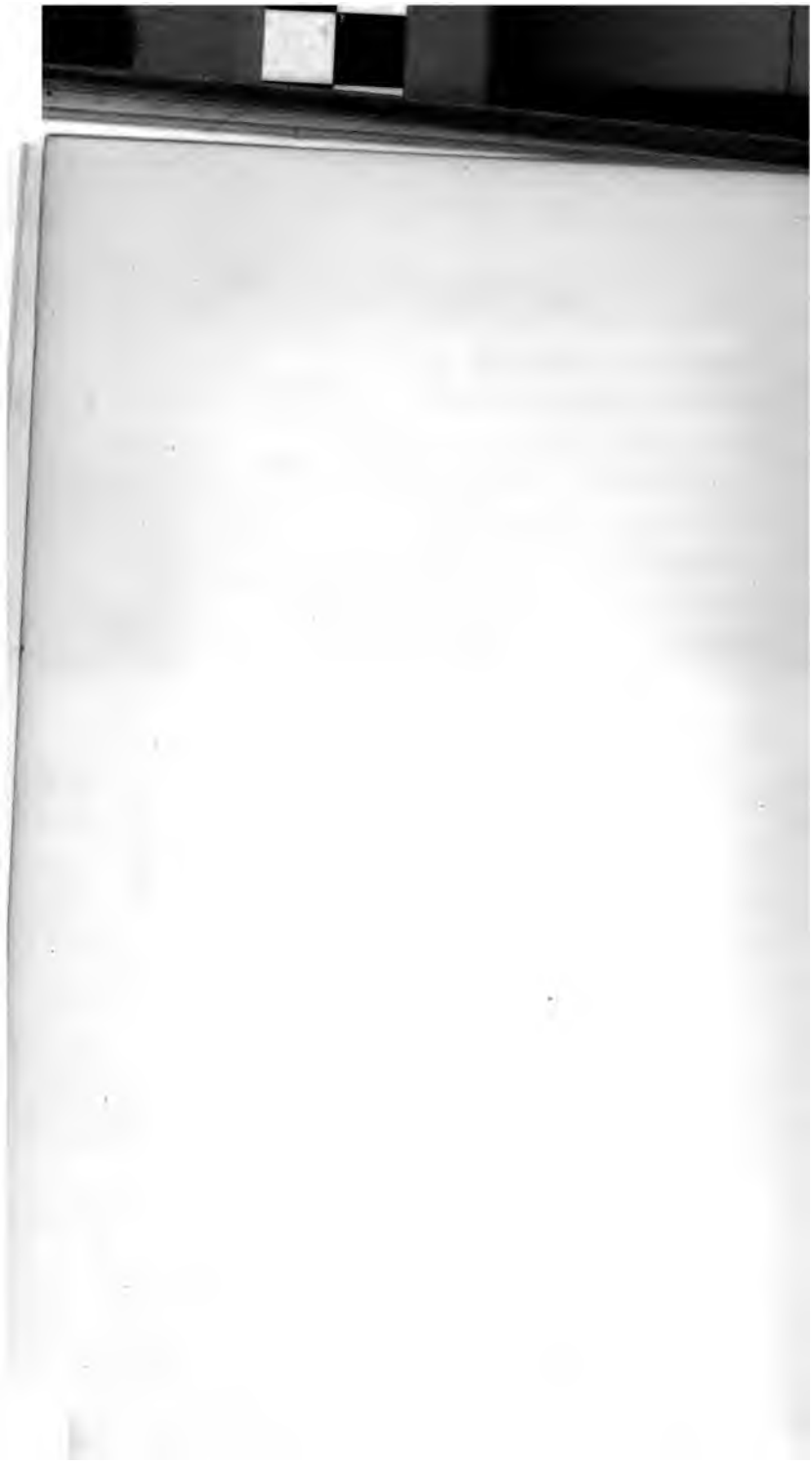
Very soon after "Sarah's" announcement, this landmark of the old city was doomed to disappear, and the gate was removed from the top of the Croft to a site some four or five hundred yards further up the road, near to the present railway arch.

An advertisement from the *Bristol Journal*, Saturday, July 14th, 1804, ran as follows:—"To be sold, the materials of the old Turnpike House at the top of Stoke's Croft. The purchaser to be at the expense of pulling down and carrying the same away. Also of pitching the site of the house by the 20th of August next. For further particulars apply to Messrs. John and Jere Osborne."

The tolls for the year ended the 29th September, 1823, realised the sum of £1,800. The notice respecting the letting of the tolls for the



OLD TURNPIKE HOUSE ON THE WICKWAR ROAD.





succeeding year, based on such takings, was signed by Osborne and Ward on the 14th of October, 1823.

The following is a toll gate announcement, issued on July 13, 1826 :—

"Notice is hereby given that the Tolls arising at the Toll Gates hereinafter particularly mentioned will be severally Let by Auction, to the best Bidders at the White Hart Inn, Brislington, on Wednesday, the 16th day of August next, between the hours of Eleven o'clock in the forenoon and One o'clock in the afternoon, in the manner directed by the Acts passed in the third and fourth years of the reign of his Majesty King George the Fourth, 'for regulating Turnpike Roads'; which Tolls produced last year the several Sums, and will be Let in the several Parcels or Lots following—viz. :—

"Lot I.—The Tolls arising from the Arno's Vale Gate, on the Brislington Road. £2,405.

"Lot II.—The Tolls arising at the Knowle Gate, on the Whitchurch Road. £660.

"Lot III.—The Tolls arising at the Saltford Gate, on the Brislington Road. £2,355.

"Lot IV.—The Tolls arising at the Whitchurch Gate, on the Whitchurch Road. £670.

"And will be put up at those Sums respectively.

"Whoever happens to be the best Bidder must, at the same time, pay one Month in advance (if required) of the Rent at which such Tolls may be respectively Let, and give security, with sufficient sureties to the satisfaction of the Trustees of the said Turnpike Roads, for payment of the rest of the money monthly.

"OSBORNE and WARD,
"Clerks to the Trustees of the said Turnpike Roads.

"Bristol, 13th July, 1826."

A turnpike ticket of 1840 was worded thus:—

Bristol Roads.
LAWFORD's GATE.

July 8, 1840

	s.	d.
Waggon		
Cart	1	
Coach, Chaise, &c.		
Gig		
Horses	2	9
Cattle		
Sheep, Pigs		
Asses		

Clears Gates on the other side





OLD TOLL-BAR HOUSE, NEAR THE RIDGE, WOTTON-UNDER-EDGE.





[From an old Talbot-type Photograph in the possession of Miss P. A. Fry, of Tower House, Cotham.

ST. MICHAEL'S HILL TURNPIKE, BRISTOL.



The other Bristol "Gates" were known as Clifton, Redland, White Ladies, Horfield, St. Michael's Hill, Cutler's Mills, Gallows Acre, Barrow's Lane, Stapleton Bridge, Pack Horse Lane, Fire-Engine Lane, George's Lane, West Street, Cherry Garden, Fire-Engine, Blackbirds, one full toll in each case.

Thomas Brooks was the last toll-keeper at St. Michael's Hill, Bristol. He held the office until it was abolished in 1867. In the following year he was appointed sub-postmaster of Cotham, and removed from the old Toll House to a house nearer the city. The Toll House stood at the corner of Hampton Road and Cotham Hill, where the fountain is now.

Benjamin Gray, the last keeper of the "Stop Gate" which stood near the Royal Oak Inn at Horfield, held the office for 30 years. The gate was to stop travellers entering the city by way of Ashley Down Road, and thus escape paying the tolls at the Zetland Road end of Gloucester Road. There is a family connection between the Gray and the Brooks families, and the daughter of Benjamin now resides with Samuel



Brooks, the old sexton of Horfield Church. A model of the Horfield Stop Gate may be seen at Robin Hood's Retreat near Berkeley Road, Bristol.

The last barrier on the great London to Bristol Road was removed when the bridge crossing the Thames at Maidenhead was freed from toll at midnight, on November 30th, 1903. There was a remarkable demonstration on the occasion: Five hundred people waded through the flooded streets to see the toll-gate removed from the bridge which was erected so far back as in 1772.

Precisely at twelve by the toll-house clock Corporation employés proceeded to remove the gate, amid loud cheering. Many of the crowd closed in, and finally seizing the huge gate, carried it to the top of Maidenhead Bridge and threw it into the river.





STANTON DREW TURNPIKE GATE HOUSE.



CHAPTER X.

DARING ROBBERIES OF THE BRISTOL MAIL BY HIGHWAYMEN, 1726–1781.—BILL NASH, MAIL COACH ROBBER, CONVICT AND RICH COLONIST, 1832.—BURGLARIES AT POST OFFICES IN LONDON AND BRISTOL, 1881–1901.

THE mail services between Bristol and the Southern Counties came into great prominence in 1903. The Postmaster-General was appealed to on the subject, and the phantom of the old Bristol and Portsmouth mail coach was conjured up to form a comparison detrimental to present-day arrangements. The discussion recalls somewhat vividly the mail coach traditions of the pre-railway period, and certainly the community of to-day has, at all events, fallen on better times as regards security of the mails, if not better night mail services. In the General Post Office letter in Lombard Street, 26th April, 1720, this note appears :—" The Bristol Mail was again robbed yesterday, in the same place as on Friday, by one highwayman:



Mist's Journal of Apl. 30, 1720, states :—"Last week the Oxford Stage Coach was robbed between Uxbridge and London, by the same highwaymen as is supposed who robbed the Bristol Mail, one of them having a scar on his forehead."

"A man, lately taken up near Maidenhead Thicket, and charged with robbing the Cirencester Stage Coach, has been examined by a Justice of the Peace, who has committed him to Reading Gaol. He is said to be a butcher's son of Thame, in Oxfordshire."

The following particulars relate to a Bristol mail coach robbery in 1721. They were taken from a pamphlet written by Wilson, who was one of the highwaymen therein alluded to, and saved his neck by informing. Wilson was a person of education, but some of his statements were questionable. The pamphlet was full of moral reflections upon the evils of bad company, gambling, &c.; it ran through several editions, so it was no doubt popular. It will be interesting as indicating the difficulties attending the Bristol mail services of the period, and that death was the penalty for robbing his Majesty's mails. It runs thus in the heading :—



"A full and impartial account of all the robberies committed by John Hawkins, George Sympson (lately executed for robbing the Bristol mails), and their companions. Written by Ralph Wilson, late one of their confederates. London: Printed for J. Poole at the Lockes Head in Paternoster Row. Price 6d."

The following is an abbreviation of the contents so far as they relate to the Bristol mails:—

John Hawkins was the son of poor but honest parents. His father was a farmer, and lived at Staines, Middlesex. Had a slender education. At 14 he waited on a gentleman, then was a tapster's boy at the Red Lion, at Brentford; got into service again, was butler to Sir Dennis Daltry; took to gambling; was suspected of being a confederate in robbing his master's house of plate; was dismissed. At the age of 24 took to highway robbery; stopped a coach on Hounslow Heath, and eased the passengers of about £11; with others committed several robberies on Bagshot and Hounslow Heaths; was arrested for attempting to rescue Captain Lennard, one of his accomplices, but was discharged.



Wilson, the writer of the pamphlet, was a Yorkshireman; became clerk to a Chancery barrister; met Hawkins at a gambling-house; they became "great cronies." Wilson joins Hawkins's gang; they commit several highway robberies. Feb. 1, 1721, Wilson goes to Yorkshire; Hawkins impeached several of his companions, and one of them (Wright) was hanged. Hawkins, Wilson, and others robbed one morning the Cirencester, the Worcester, the Gloster, the Oxford, and the Bristol stage coaches; the next morning the Ipswich and Colchester coaches; a third morning, perhaps the Portsmouth. The Bury coach was "our constant customer."

Sympson, who was born at Putney, and had no education, had by this time joined the gang. The robberies were continued. In April (1722) they went back to their old design of robbing the mail coaches. They first proposed to rob the Harwich mail, but gave up that design because that mail was "as uncertain as the wind." They then decided to rob the Bristol mail. Wilson said he objected to this plan, but he joined in it. They set out Sunday, April 15th. "The



next morning being Monday, we took the mail, and again on Wednesday morning. The meaning of taking it twice was to get the halves of some bank bills, the first halves whereof we took out of the mail on Monday morning." On Monday, April 23rd, Wilson learnt at the Moorgate Coffee House that there was a great request for the robbers of the Bristol mail. He therefore contemplated taking a passage to Newcastle, but before he could do so he was arrested, and carried to the General Post Office, where he was examined by the Postmaster-General. He was again examined by the Postmaster-General (Carteret) the next morning, but he denied all knowledge of the robbery. While under examination, a messenger came from Hawkins, who was in prison at the Gate House, "to let the Post-house know that he had impeached me." One of the officers of the Post Office then showed Wilson an unsigned letter, which he recognised as being in Sympson's handwriting, confessing his share in the robbery, and offering to secure his two companions. Wilson then decided to confess. Hawkins and Sympson were tried, found guilty, and executed 21st May, 1722.



In connection with this Bristol mail robbery, the following are interesting particulars from the calendar of Treasury papers:—"Memorial of William Saunderson, clerk, to Sir Robert Walpole. Says he was author of an expedient to prevent the Bristol and other mails from being robbed. The scheme seems to have been to write with red ink on the foreside of all bank notes the name of the post town where they were posted, the day of the month, and also the addition of these words, viz.:—'From Bristol to London,' &c. These services (presumably Saunderson's) have been attended with great expense and loss of time, and no mail robberies have since been committed. Asks for compensation. Referred 11th April, 1728, to postmasters to report. May 23, 1728.—Affidavit of W. Saunderson, receiver, of Holford, West Somerset (probably the same person), that he sent a letter subscribed A. Z. to the Postmaster-General offering an expedient to prevent the robbing of the Bristol and other mails, and of the subsequent negotiations with the Post Office; has never received any reward. Mr. Carteret claimed the contrivance of the scheme wholly to



himself. May 29th.—Postmaster-General's report of 17th April read: 'My Lords satisfied with the report.' Saunderson had no pretence to any reward. Scheme entirely formed at Post Office without assistance of Saunderson or anybody else. Saunderson called in, informed that my Lords adhere to Postmaster-General's report, and nothing more will be ordered therein."

Stealing a letter or robbing the mail was a capital offence long after Hawkins and Sympson expiated their offences on the scaffold. Thus a notice from the General Post Office on the 24th July, 1767, issued in the *London Evening Post*, dated "From Tuesday, July 28th, to Thursday, July 30th, 1767," recited that—"Notice is hereby given that by an Act passed the last Session of Parliament, 'For amending certain Laws relating to the revenue of the Post Office, and for granting rates of postage for the conveyance of letters and packets between Great Britain and the Isle of Man, and within that Island,' it is enacted—That from and after the first day of November, 1767, if any person employed or afterwards to be employed in the



Post Office shall 'secrete, embezzle, or destroy any letters, &c.,' 'every such offender, being thereof convicted, shall be deemed guilty of felony and shall suffer death as a felon, without benefit of clergy.' Also if any person or persons whatsoever shall rob any mail or mails, in which letters are sent or conveyed by post, although it shall not prove to be highway robbery or robbery committed in a dwelling-house, yet such offender or offenders shall be 'deemed guilty of felony, and shall suffer death as a felon, without benefit of clergy.'" In 1781 there was another robbery of the Bristol mail. The occurrence was set forth in detail in the following notice, which was issued on January 29th in that year:—

"General Post Office, Jan. 29, 1781.

"The Postboy bringing the Bristol Mail this morning from Maidenhead was stop't between two and three o'clock by a single Highwayman with a crape over his face, between the 11th and 12th milestones, near the Cranford Bridge, who presented a pistol to him, and after making him alight, drove away the Horse and Cart, which



were found about 7 o'clock this morning in a meadow field near Farmer Lott's at Twyford, when it appears that the greatest part of the letters were taken out of the Bath and Bristol Bags, and that the following bags were entirely taken away:—Pewsey, Ramsbury, Bradford, Henley, Cirencester, Gloucester, Ross, Presteign, Fairford, Aberystwith, Carmarthen, Pembroke, Calne, Trowbridge, Wallingford, Reading, Stroud, Ledbury, Hereford, Northleach, Lechlade, Lampeter, Tenby, Abergavenny, Newbury, Melksham, Maidenhead, Wantage, Wotton-under-Edge, Tewkesbury, Leominster, Cheltenham, Hay, Cardigan, Haverfordwest.

"The person who committed this robbery is supposed to have had an accomplice, as two persons passed the Postboy on Cranford Bridge on Horseback, prior to the Robbery, one of whom he thinks was the robber; but it being so extremely dark, he is not able to give any description of their persons.

"Whoever shall apprehend and convict, or cause to be apprehended and convicted, the person who committed this Robbery, will be



entitled to a reward of Two Hundred Pounds, over and above the Reward given by Act of Parliament for apprehending Highwaymen; or if any person, whether an Accomplice in the Robbery or knoweth thereof, shall make Discovery whereby the Person who committed the same may be apprehended and brought to Justice, such Discoverer will upon conviction of the party be entitled to the Same Reward of Two Hundred Pounds, and will also receive his Majesty's most gracious Pardon.

" By Command of the Postmaster-General,

" ANTH. TODD, Sec."

The robbery, which was graphically described by Mr. G. Hendy, of St. Martin's-le-Grand, in the 1901 Christmas Number of " The Road," does not appear to have been a very daring one as regards the act itself, but it was so as to its consequences. There was no mail coach—no driver in scarlet—no mail guard—no passengers, but only a ramshackle iron mail cart—a " post-boy " as driver and carrying no arms. What a contrast is this old mail cart with a single horse, carrying the mails for all the places enumerated



in the Notice, to the splendidly appointed four-horse mail coaches of a period thirty years later on, or to the present time, when on the Great Western Railway one whole train is used to carry only a moiety of the King's mail to Bristol and the West! No wonder that the postboy fell an easy victim to the highwaymen, who bound him and threw him into an out-of-the-way field. The desperadoes proved to be two brothers, young men of the name of Weston.

The Westons, after the robbery, went up and down the country on the North road very rapidly, in order to get rid of the £10,000 to £15,000 worth of bank notes and bills which they plundered from the mails. The Bow Street runners were on their track from the first, and the chase continued from London to Carlisle and back. The vagabonds were not, however, captured, and the notice was exhibited all over the country, with the addition of the description of the men wanted by the thief-catchers.

In 1782, the brothers were tried for another offence and acquitted, but they were arrested at once for the robbery of the Bristol mail and com-



mitted to Newgate. On trial they were found guilty, and paid the penalty of death by hanging at Tyburn, on the 3rd September, 1782. In later years the death penalty for robbing mails was abolished, and at least one old sinner who robbed the Bristol mail eventually did remarkably well through having committed that dire offence against the laws, and by having been transported to the Antipodes at his country's expense.

Particulars of his career have been furnished by Mr. R. C. Newick, of Cloudshill, St. George, Bristol, by means of the following extract from a work published in 1853, "Adventures in Australia, '52–'53," by the Rev. Berkeley Jones, M.A., late curate of Belgrave Chapel (Bentley, London, 1853):—"If you turn into any of the auction rooms in Sydney the day after the gold escort comes in you may see and, if you can, buy, pretty yellow-looking lumps from about the size of a pin's head to a horse bean, or, if you prefer it, a flat piece about the size of a small dessert plate. One of the greatest buyers is an old pardoned convict of the name of 'William,' or, as he is there



more commonly called, 'Bill' Nash, who robbed the Bristol mail, of which he was the guard: His wife followed him—as some say, with the booty—and set up a fine shop in Pitt Street in the haberdashery line. Under the old system he was assigned to her as a servant. Her own husband her domestic! What a burlesque on transportation as a punishment! He is very unpopular with the old hands, as he returned to England and offered an intentional affront to Queen Victoria when driving in the Park, by drawing his horses across the road as her equipage was driving by. He cut a great dash in the Regent's Park, and was known as the 'flash returned convict.' We stood by him at Messrs. Cohen's auction room when the gold fraud (planting on the gold buyers nuggets made in Birmingham) was discussed. He addressed us, and we cannot add that he prepossessed us much in his favour. He looks what he is and has been: In a little cupboard-looking shop in King Street he may be seen in shirt sleeves spreading a tray full of sovereigns in the shop front and heaping up bank-notes as a border to them, inviting anyone

to sell their gold to him. We believe he is now among the wealthiest men of New South Wales."

By the year 1830 the terror inspired by highwaymen had no doubt diminished, but the coach proprietors thought it prudent to guard themselves against loss, and so they put increased charges on the articles of value they had to carry: On the 1st September, 1830, a coaching notice of about 1,000 words, based on an Act of Parliament, was put forth by Moses Pickwick and Company from the White Hart, Bath. A copy of this notice on a large screen was exhibited recently at the Dickens celebration at Bath: The notice, in legal or other jargon, announced the increased rate of charge for commission by mail or stage coach of articles of value. Put into plain form, the increased rates of charge were as follows, viz. :—Additional charge for parcel or package over £10 in value.—For every pound, or for the value of every pound, contained in such parcel or package over and above the ordinary rate of carriage, not exceeding 100 miles, 1d.; 100 to 150 miles, 1½d.; 150 to 200 miles, 2d.; 200 to 250 miles, 2½d.; exceeding 250 miles, 3d.



[*By permission of "Bath Chronicle."*

THE WHITE HART COACHING INN, BATH.



Few people now bear in mind the great robbery of registered letters from the Hatton Garden Branch Post Office, London, in November, 1881, which was effected with skill and daring, and yet with simplicity as to method. At 5.0 p.m. on the eventful day the members of the staff were busily engaged, when, lo! the gas suddenly went out, and the office, which was full of people at the time, was left in darkness. The lady supervisor obtained matches, went to the basement and there found that the gas had been turned off at the meter. When the gas had been turned on again and lighted, it was discovered that the registered letter bag, which had already been made up and was awaiting the call of the collecting postman, was missing. The bag contained 40 registered letters, and their value was estimated at from £80,000 to £100,000. In the many years which have elapsed since the great robbery no clue to the perpetrators of the daring deed has been discovered. No further attempts at such robberies took place for some time, but in the year 1888 several daring burglaries took place at post offices in London. The Smithfield



Branch Post Office was the first broken into, the thieves staying in the office from Saturday night to Sunday night. During that interval they removed the safe from under the counter, placed it in the Chief Officer's enclosure, broke it open and rifled the contents. Cash and stamps to the value of about £180 were stolen. In the autumn of the same year the Aldgate B.O. was burgled —a Saturday night being chosen for the exploit. The manner in which the burglary was effected leaves little doubt that the depredation was committed by the same gang of thieves. The safe was broken open, but in this case it was left under the counter, where it stood, and was there rifled of its contents. The interior of the office, including a part of the counter under which the safe stood, was fully visible from the outside, the woodwork in front of the office having been kept low for the purpose, and it was marvellous that the thieves were not detected, as a poor woman had just been murdered by "Jack the Ripper" within 200 yards, and the road in front of the post office was thronged with excited people. The thieves in this case



got off with cash and stamps to the value of £328.

Later in the same year, the South Kensington Branch Post Office was entered by burglars under precisely similar circumstances. The thieves only obtained the small sum of £6, as, being disturbed, they decamped in haste, leaving behind them their tools and certain articles of clothing. They had removed the safe, weighing 1½ cwt., from the public office without being observed, although it was taken from a spot immediately in front of a large window, through which police and passers-by could command full view of the office. The Westbourne Grove and Peckham Branch Post Offices were also burglariously entered in the same year. Although the burglars were not discovered in connection with these post office robberies, and none more daring of their kind have occurred since, they probably were imprisoned for some other misdemeanour. Was it—it may well be asked—this same gang of burglars released from durance vile who committed the post office robbery which in 1901 took place at Westbury-on-Trym, a suburb



of Bristol, three miles distant from the city? For daring it might well have been they, as the following account will demonstrate.

The post office, be it said, was in the middle of the village and within 200 yards of the Gloucestershire Constabulary Depôt, and actually within sight of it. It was during the early hours of the morning of the 18th October that the burglary took place. Not far from the post office building operations were being carried on, and from the houses in course of erection the thieves obtained a ladder and a wheelbarrow. Making their way to the side of the premises, one member of the gang, by means of the borrowed ladder effected an entrance through the fanlight over the postmen's room door, and marks of damp stockinged feet revealed the fact that they crept through a sliding window into the post office counter room, where the safe was located. The street door was then opened to their confederates, and the safe, weighing nearly 2 cwt., was carried to the barrow outside. The thieves retired to a partially completed dwelling for the purpose of examining the contents of the safe. They broke open the



THE OLD POST OFFICE, WESTBURY-ON-TRYM.





carpenter's locker, and many tools were subsequently found on the floor. These evidently had not assisted the gang to any great extent, as they found it necessary to use a heavy pick-axe. The noise they made seems to have aroused the inmates of the neighbouring houses, and it is said that one resident struck a light and actually saw them at work, but he concluded that they were merely doing something in connection with the extensive drainage alterations which had been in progress for many months. This light apparently disturbed the thieves, for they departed with their burden and the pickaxe and retraced their steps. Close to the Parish Institute they managed, in spite of the darkness, to discover a gap in the hedge, and having forced the wheelbarrow through this, they left unmistakable traces of the route taken across the adjoining field.

Having wheeled the safe some 300 or 400 yards, and some 50 yards beyond the cottages in Canford Lane, they again brought the pickaxe into requisition, and some hours later a workman discovered the safe, with one end broken into



dozens of pieces, lying near the hedge. He at once gave information to the police. It was afterwards found that, although the thieves had removed the paper money from the safe, they had thrown the postal orders, money order forms, stamps, licenses, etc., into a neighbouring field, where they were found strewn about in great disorder. The safe contained postal orders stamps, postcards, and cash of the total value of £315. Cash to the value of £25 was the extent of the thieves' booty, and they left behind them three £5 notes, half a sovereign, and two sixpences, which were found on the grass. As all the articles were dry, it was apparent that the robbery took place after 2 a.m., up to which time there had been rain. The officials at the office had begun their morning's work quite unconscious of what had happened, when Police Sergeant Greenslade appeared with the handle of the safe. The fact of the officials not having been disturbed may be accounted for by the circumstance that blasting operations had been carried on at night in the immediate neighbourhood for some twelve months before. The sub-



postmistress and her family, it appeared, did not retire to rest until very near midnight, and it is supposed that they were in their first heavy sleep, but it is a mystery why the dog, a sharp fox terrier, remained quiet.

The safe was kept in a prominent position in the shop—two people slept just over it—and the exterior of the shop was well lighted at night by a large public lamp. Sleeping in the house were several females and males, one of the latter being an ex-Sergeant-Major of Dragoons, 6 feet 2 inches in height and of great bodily strength. Next door lived a baker whose workman is about early in the morning, so it may be inferred that the burglars had no small amount of nerve. Within a week another robbery took place at a mansion within a mile of the post office. This occurred in the evening. Whether or not this second burglary was the work of the same gang which carried off the post office safe, there is similar evidence of most carefully laid plans and of intimate acquaintance with the house and the habits of its occupants.

Ere the excitement of these two burglaries



had passed off as a nine days' wonder, another robbery equally bold in character took place, and this time in the very centre of the city of Bristol, and in its most frequented thoroughfare. A jeweller's shop window was rifled at 6.0 a.m., at a time when the police were being relieved. The thieves got off with about £2,000 worth of rings, etc. These three burglaries in conjunction seem to indicate the work of one gang of professional burglars hailing probably from the Metropolis.

A little time later, a post office safe in the West End of London was rifled, the burglars discarding old methods of violence in breaking it open, and using a jet of oxyhydrogen flame to burn away a portion of the safe door!



CHAPTER XI.

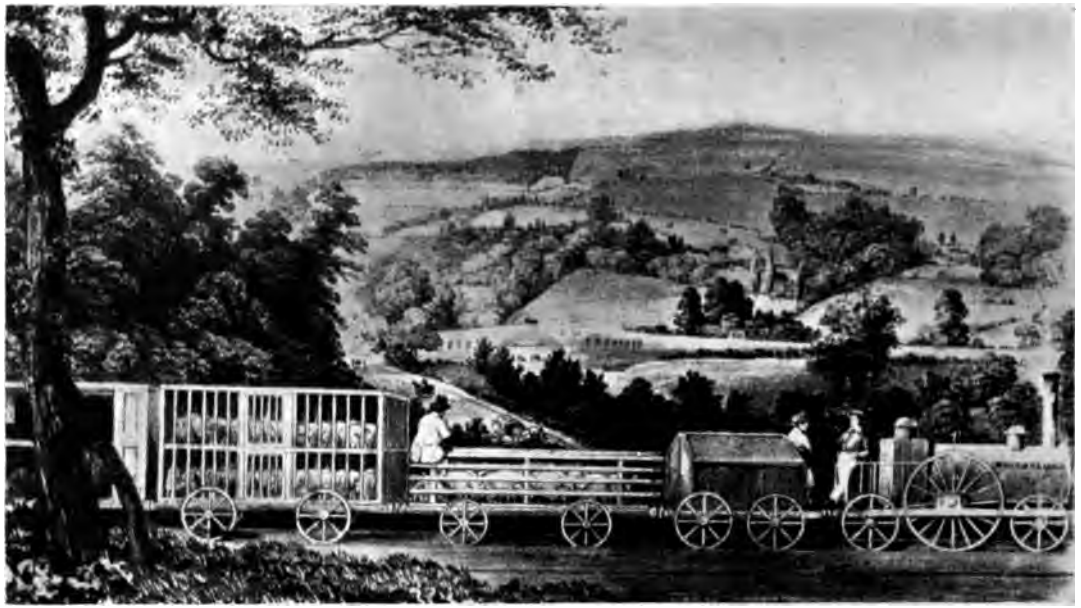
MANCHESTER AND LIVERPOOL MAILS.—FROM COACH TO RAIL.—THE WESTERN RAILROAD.—POST OFFICE ARBITRATION CASE.

WHEN the construction of the Great Western Railway was in contemplation, the prospect of the Londoner being able to pay a morning visit to Bristol, in even four or five hours, was hailed with satisfaction, as will be gathered from the following article from *The Sun* newspaper of March 26th, 1832:—

"RAILWAY FROM LONDON TO BRISTOL.—We understand that two civil engineers of eminence, Henry H. Price and Wm. Brunton, Esqrs:, are busily occupied (under the auspices of some leading interests) in making the necessary surveys for the above important work. We hail with satisfaction the prospect of seeing the metropolis, ere long, thus closely approximated to the Bristol Channel and Western Seas, when four or five

hours will enable us to pay a morning visit to Bristol. Nothing can tend more to increase and consolidate the power of the empire than to give the greatest possible facility of intercourse between its distant points. When the London and Bristol railway shall be completed, it will be very possible, in connexion with the Irish steam-boats from the latter port, for cattle and other Irish produce to be conveyed to the London market within 32 hours from the time of shipment at Cork, Waterford, &c., and thus, at a cheap rate, will the London market be thrown immediately open to the Irish agriculturist; at the same time the London consumers will be benefited in proportion to the greater extent of country thrown open whence they may derive their supplies. Liverpool, we understand, imports above 7,000 head of live stock per week; much of which is conveyed to Manchester by the railway, and we may surely hope for a similar result to the metropolis, when the direct communication is opened with Ireland by similar means. In a political point of view, the importance of the great work in question is too obvious to require a





PRIMITIVE GREAT WESTERN RAILWAY TRAIN BETWEEN BRISTOL AND BATH, PASSING KELSTON BRIDGE.



moment's comment. We need only state, that in case of emergency, four to five hours will be sufficient to convey any quantity of men or stores from our depôts or arsenals near London to Bristol, whence they will be ready to embark for any point where they may be required, and we at once prove that railways, judiciously constructed across the country, may be made, not only the means of economy to the Government (smaller establishments being necessary), but that they tend more than anything else to concentrate and consolidate the strength of an empire, and are an additional guarantee against war and foreign aggression."

In these days of special trains, composed exclusively of Post Office carriages, such for instance as the night mail on the Great Western Railway, leaving Paddington at 9.5 p.m., consisting of eight coaches with engine (usually the "Alexandra" or "Duke of York"), and measuring 400 feet in length, which runs the whole journey from London to Penzance in the space of 9 hours 40 minutes, stopping at Bristol and a few other first-class stations *en route*, it may be



interesting to recall the earliest period of the conveyance of mails by railway. Light is thrown thereon in the following correspondence relating to the then conveyance of the mails to Manchester and Liverpool, partly by the recently-constructed railway, and partly by road:—"Liverpool, 4th July, 1837. Dear Sir, We reached this place precisely at half-past twelve—exactly an hour behind our time—the loss arose out of various little *contretemps*, which a little practice will set right. This is the first time in Europe so long a journey was performed in so short a time, and if, some very few years ago, it had been said a letter could be answered by return of post from London, the idea would have been treated as chimerical, and yet at eight last evening was I in London, and this letter will reach there to-morrow morning, the proceeding of these operations occupying a period of 34½ hours only, out of which a rest of three hours is to be taken, thus performing a distance of 412 miles in 31½ hours.

"Our mail coach was before its time full 15 minutes, notwithstanding at one place we could





BRISTOL AND EXETER RAILWAY TRAIN BRINGING MAILS TO BRISTOL ON THE DECLINE OF THE MAIL COACH SYSTEM ABOUT 1844. (CLIFTON BRIDGE ANTICIPATED BY THE ARTIST.)



not find horses, except posters; and at another when posters were found there was no coachman; luckily there was one on the mail, looking out for a place, with which we suited him. To-night, doubtless, all will go right (some dispute among the amiable contractors, I believe to be the cause). I need hardly observe that I have adopted proper measures. I have the honour to be, Dear Sir, Yours very faithfully, (Signed) Geo. Louis. To Lt.-Col. Maberley, &c., &c., &c."

"Manchester, 4th July, 1837. Sir, I have much pleasure in stating that the London Bag arrived here this day by railway at half-past twelve p.m. The Bag to London was despatched as usual this morning by the mail coach, but concluding that a *return by the railway* is intended both this day and to-morrow (although the arrangements generally do not commence until the 6th) I make a despatch with such letters as are in the office at half-past two p.m., and propose doing the same to-morrow. I am, Sir, Your most obedient, humble Servant, (Sig.) G. F. Karstadt. To Lt.-Col. Maberley."



"4th July, 1837. Manchester. G. Karstadt, Esq. For the Postmaster-General. I enclose a letter from Mr. Louis with this report from Mr. Karstadt as to the first working of the railroad. I am sorry to say that it appears from the time bills an hour was lost upon the rail-road coming up. (Signed) J. V. L. M. (Lt.-Col. Maberly). 5th July, 1837. Read, Lichfield (Lord Lichfield)." The coaches running all the way through at this period were timed to leave London at 8 p.m., and arrive at Liverpool and Manchester at 2.30 p.m. On the up journey the coaches left Manchester and Liverpool at 11.30 a.m., and reached London at 6.30 a.m.

The conveyance of the mail partly by road and partly by rail came into operation on the Western road from 1838 to 1841 as section by section of the Great Western Railway became completed. Thus, in 1840, mails which had come by road between Maidenhead and Bath were brought into Bristol by trains composed of very primitive engines, tenders and coaches, as depicted in the illustrations taken from engravings of the period.



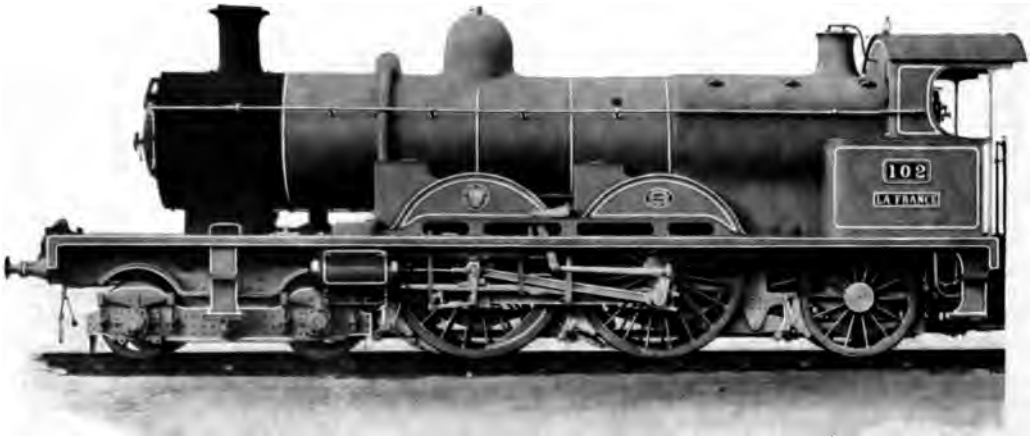
Mr. J. W. Arrowsmith, the world-wide known Bristol Publisher, recently reprinted Arrowsmith's Railway Guide of 1854, the year of its first issue. It is interesting to note from the re-publication that the shortest time in which Mails and passengers were conveyed between London and Plymouth was 7 hours, 25 minutes, and between Plymouth and London 7 hours, 35 minutes. What a change a half-century has brought about! The pace of the trains has been vastly increased, and even goods trains accomplish the journey from London to Bristol in three hours. There is no such thing as finality in speed, as the Great Western Railway Company has been trying a French engine, with a view to beat all previous records. One of these engines was tried in France with the equivalent of fifteen loaded coaches behind it. It was brought to a dead stop on a steep incline, and when started again it gathered speed, so that before the summit was reached it was travelling at its normal speed—74.6 miles an hour.

This new engine, "La France," recently accomplished a brilliant feat. She was started from



Exeter with a load of twelve of the largest corridor-bogies, one being a "diner," the whole weight behind her tender, including passengers, staff, luggage, and stores, being nearly 330 tons. "La France" ran the 75½ miles to Temple Meads Station, Bristol, in 72½ minutes, start to stop, thus averaging 62.5 miles an hour, although she had to face a 20-mile climb at the start, the last 27 miles of this stretch being at 1 in 115. She went on from Bristol to London, 118½ miles, with the same heavy load, in exactly 118 minutes. Her time from Bath to Paddington, 107 miles, was 104 minutes; from Swindon, 77½ miles, 72 minutes; from Reading, 36 miles, 33 minutes.

A good performance in long distance railway running was established by the Great Western Railway Company in connection with the visit in 1903 of the Prince and Princess of Wales to Cornwall. Their Royal Highnesses left Paddington in a special division of the Cornishman at 10.40 a.m., the train being timed to do the non-stop run to North Road, Plymouth, a distance of 245 miles, in four hours and a half. This time was, however, reduced to the extent of 36½ min., the train



[*By permission of "Great Western Railway Magazine."*

"LA FRANCE"—POWERFUL NEW GREAT WESTERN RAILWAY ENGINE.





steaming into North Road at 33¾ minutes past 2 o'clock. The train covered during the first hour's run 67¾ miles, the average speed for the whole journey to Plymouth being 1.049 miles per minute. The journey was performed in about half the time occupied in 1854.

The up train, which runs from Bristol to London in exactly two hours, via Badminton, is matched by a down train in the same time by the easier but slightly longer main line (*via* Bath), giving a start-to-stop speed of 59½ miles an hour, with a dead slow through Bath Station. But to Bath, where a coach is slipped, the inclusive speed is 60 miles an hour, as the distance is 107 miles (all but 10 chains), and the time from Paddington, 1 hr. 47 min. This is by the 10.50 a.m. "Cornishman," and is said to be the first Great Western train ever booked at a mile a minute, and the first train on any London Railway even "scheduled" at that speed.

In connection with the Mail Services between the Metropolis and Bristol, the "Gate of the West," it may be appropriate here to mention the recent arbitration case between the Great Western Rail-



way Company and H.M. Postmaster-General in regard to remuneration for conveyance of Mails.

The Company, dissatisfied with the payment of £115,000 a year under their contract of 1885, subsequently raised by small additions, from time to time, to £126,000 a year, brought their case before the Railway Commissioners, who awarded £135,855 a year from the 1st July, 1902. This amount covered the provision of a new postal train in each direction between London and Penzance. It was Sir Frederick Peel who delivered the judgment of the Court.



CHAPTER XII.

PRIMITIVE POST OFFICE.—FIFTH CLAUSE POSTS.—MAIL CART IN A RHINE.—EFFECT OF GALES ON POST AND TELEGRAPH SERVICE.

THE Bristol Postal District, stretching from the Severn banks beyond Oldbury-on-Severn to a point near Bath, and thence straight across to the Bristol Channel again, consists of ground within the City and County of Bristol, and the Counties of Gloucestershire and Somersetshire. The border of Wiltshire is touched near Dyrham and Badminton, and the district is separated from Monmouthshire by the estuary of the River Severn.

Post Offices showing signs of great antiquity are scarcely in existence now, for at the present day the wide district thus described in the preceding paragraph contains within its boundaries only one post office established under the primitive but comfortable and picturesque



thatched roof. This is the Horton Post Office. The picture of this post office is from an excellent photograph taken by Miss Begbie, a daughter of the Rector of Horton. The village lies at the foot of the Cotswolds, and near this spot, in quiet retreat, William Tyndale translated the New Testament. The Duke of Beaufort's hounds meet from time to time in the Horton Post Office yard. This rustic place was originally the village ale house, yclept "The Horse Shoe." It is now devoted to the more useful purpose of the sale of stamps and the posting and distribution of letters, under the able and energetic superintendence of Mrs. Slade.

Such Postal Sub-Districts as Horton, far remote from their principal centre, were classified under Parliamentary legislation. Thus the fifth Clause posts of early in the 19th Century took their name from the Act 41, Geo. 3, Ch. 7, Clause 5, under which they were established. Special post marks were in use for such posts. In the case of the Bristol district there was only one 5th Clause post, namely, at Thornbury, which was established in 1825, and under its regulations one penny



HORTON THATCHED POST OFFICE AT THE FOOT OF COTSWOLD HILLS.





was charged for the delivery of each letter at Thornbury. The post was a horse post from and to Bristol, and the Contractor delivered and collected bags at Almondsbury and Fylton, which were both "penny posts." The main object of the fifth Clause post was to join up small towns with the larger post towns and so it was that Thornbury became thus linked on to Bristol. On the other hand, Bristol had 63 penny posts, including Almondsbury and Fylton, which were denoted by numbers 1 to 63, Clifton being No. 1.

Of the 52 "Fifth Clause Posts" existing in 1839 Bristol had only the one which joined Bristol and Thornbury.

Owing to there being no settled port of departure or arrival for vessels employed for conveyance of Foreign Mails, the letters were frequently despatched by privately-owned ships. They were then impressed with a post-mark "Ship Letter," with the name of the town included.

The Penny Post letters were such as had been posted in any one of the 63 Bristol Penny Post Sub-District Offices for delivery in the district of



posting, or in any of the 62 other Offices. Thus a letter posted in Fylton for delivery in Fylton would be charged one penny upon being handed in at that Post Office, and another penny would be obtained on delivery to the addressee.

A letter posted at the Penny Post Office of Almondsbury for delivery in the Penny Post District of Fylton would be charged a penny upon being handed in at the Almondsbury Office and another penny would be charged to the addressee on delivery. Thornbury being a 5th Clause Post would have letters posted in its special "Open" box, delivered in the Thornbury Postal area for the one penny, that charged on delivery.

A letter posted in the "Open" box at Thornbury (5th Clause Post) for Bristol would likewise travel from Poster to addressee for the 1d. delivery charge in Bristol, as bags would be exchanged between the two places.

A single letter, *i.e.*, a letter without an enclosure, coming from Reading for Thornbury, would be charged a general post rate of 8d. to Bristol, plus 1d. for delivery, which would be the same in



THORNBURY

Bristol
5th Cls Post.

BRISTOL
SHIP-LETTER





EARLY BRISTOL POST MARKS.





the cases of letters from Reading for Fylton or Almondsbury; but if a letter were posted at Thornbury for Reading, there would be no charge from Thornbury to Bristol, so that the addressee would only be called upon to pay the general post rate of 8d., whereas, the postage on a letter from Fylton or Almondsbury would be 8d., plus a penny charged for collection.

The mail services in the rural districts are not free from danger. The pitcher may have been carried to the fountain year after year without mishap, but it not infrequently becomes broken at last. In like manner the contractor for the Portishead, Clevedon, and Yatton mail cart service, after having driven over this route with immunity from accident for forty years, yet came to grief in the last week of his connection with His Majesty's mails, January, 1902. The contractor's time table was arranged thus:— Portishead, leave 9.15 p.m.; Clevedon, arrive 10.5 p.m., leave 10.50 p.m.; Yatton, arrive 11.28 p.m.; attend to apparatus and up mail 12.17 a.m., down mail 12.42 a.m.; Yatton, leave 1:5 a.m.; Clevedon, arrive 1.48 a.m., depart 4.15 a.m.; Portishead, arrive 5.5 a.m.



The contractor, Mr. Dawes, now in the 66th year of his age, having performed a part of his outward journey on the 19th September, 1902, left Clevedon for Yatton quite sober as ever, and in his usual health. Then comes the mystery. He did not reach Yatton in due course, and the railway signalman intimated the failure to Bristol, from which office the postmaster of Clevedon was advised, who at early dawn started out a scout on a bicycle to search for the missing mailman and mail bags. The scout discovered no signs of man or mails between Clevedon and the Yatton apparatus station, and going back over the same ground, he eventually met an individual who had seen an aged man with a whip in his hand wandering on the road. This he knew to be his man, and he discovered Dawes walking aimlessly along the road at about 7 a.m. His explanations were not coherent. The horse had run away with him, and flung him off the cart into a ditch; he had tumbled off the cart, and walked into a ditch; he had tried to knock people up to assist him in trying to find what had become of the missing mails! In the meantime, a farm labourer going



out on to the Kingston Seymour moors to milk the cows discovered the mail cart turned over on to its side, and thus embedded in a rhine on the roadside. The horse also was in the rhine, up to his back, partly in mud and partly in water. The milkman immediately started off to Clevedon to give the alarm, and his employer, who was accompanying him on his journey to the milking ground, took prompt steps, in conjunction with moor men, to drag horse and vehicle out of the mud and mire. Fortunately, the mailbags were uninjured, and the postmaster of Clevedon, who had set out on a search, had them conveyed back to his office. Dazed contractor Dawes, the muddy mail cart, and horse coated with mud from head to hoofs, were got back into the town at about 11 a.m. It would seem that the contractor fell asleep and tumbled from his box into the road, and that his horse wandered on, grazing from side to side of the road, till eventually in the dark of night horse and cart fell into the rhine. On coming to himself, the contractor, after trying in vain to arouse the inhabitants of roadside houses, wandered about all night, or it may be laid down



somewhere to await morning light. The animal was injured to such an extent that it had to be destroyed.

During the fierce gale which, with unparalleled severity, raged in the Bristol Channel on the night of Thursday, the 10th September, 1903, a vessel was driven ashore on the Gore Sands. Soon after daybreak a call was made for the Burnham Lifeboat, but, in consequence of the heavy seas, the crew was unable to launch her. The coxswain, therefore, telegraphed for the Watchet Lifeboat to proceed to the rescue. Every endeavour was made by the Postal Telegraph authorities to expeditiously transmit the message, but the elements which had operated against the vessel, had likewise played havoc with the telegraph wires, with the result that the telegram sustained such delay in transmission as to retard the launching of the Lifeboat. Fortunately, no serious consequences followed.

As regards mail communication, the night journey by road from Bristol to Bath and Chippenham could not be made, owing to the roads being blocked by fallen trees.



The gale was far reaching in its effects, and carried away parts of Weston-super-Mare Pier, landed boats on promenade, blew down walls, chimneys, and laid low hundreds of trees, was especially "a howler," and disastrous as regards interference with telegraphic communication. Wires were blown down in all directions, and Bristol suffered greatly. On the 11th, at 11.0 a.m., there was no wire whatever available to South Wales, and telegrams had to be sent by train. There was no wire available to Scotland or to the north beyond Birmingham, or to Cork and Jersey. Several local lines were down, such as Wedmore, Hambrook, Yatton, Portishead, Wickwar, etc. Delay of 50 minutes occurred to Birmingham, which office transmitted all work for the north. The delay to London was 40 minutes. Trunk telephone communication was impossible. Every wire was interrupted, and remained so all day. In the evening there was still no wire which could be used to Scotland, Cork, or Channel Islands. Cardiff was reached at 3.0 p.m., on one wire.



CHAPTER XIII.

BRISTOL REJUVENATED.—VISIT OF PRINCE OF WALES IN CONNECTION WITH THE NEW BRISTOL DOCK.—BRISTOL AND JAMAICAN MAIL SERVICE.—AMERICAN MAILS.—BRISTOL SHIP LETTER MAILS.—THE REDLAND POST OFFICE.—THE MEDICAL OFFICER.—BRISTOL TELEGRAPHISTS IN THE SOUTH AFRICAN WAR.—LORD STANLEY.—MR. J. PAUL BUSH.

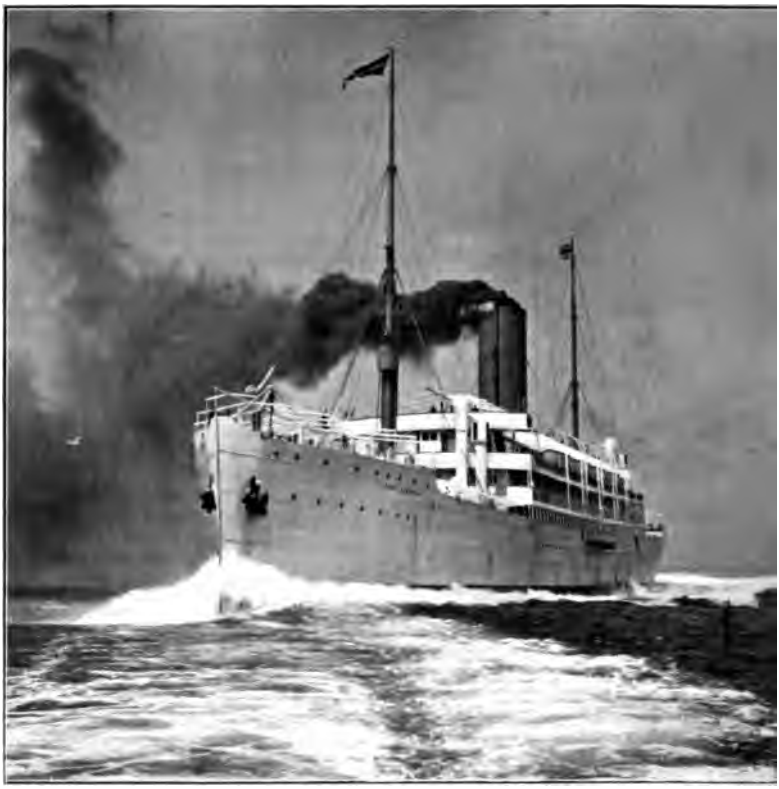
BRISTOL "lethargic" was for years the general idea of the place. Bristol "awakening" followed, and it is now realised that Bristol has fully awakened to her vast potentialities. The eyes of the populace of Great Britain, and, it may be, of many of the dwellers in the King's dominions beyond the seas, were in March, 1902, cast in the direction of the ancient city of Bristol, erstwhile the second port in importance in the British Isles. This national looking to what Bristolians proudly call the "metropolis of Western England" was occasioned by the visit of the Prince of Wales, with H.R.H. the Princess, to turn the



Yours faithfully
Alfred A. Yates







R.M.S. "PORT KINGSTON" (7,584 TONS),
of the Imperial Direct West Indian Mail Fleet.



first sod in connection with the great works then about to be undertaken for the extension of the docks at Avonmouth, so as to render them capable of accommodating and berthing steamers of a magnitude greater than any yet built—a work then expected to be completed in four or five years. The function was a notable one, and the occasion may be briefly summed up as "a grand day for Bristol." Two millions are being spent on the dock, which will have a water space of thirty acres, with room for further extension. The lock will be 875 feet long and 100 feet wide. There will be 5,000 feet of quay space, with abundant railway sidings and other appointments of a first-class port.

In Feb., 1902, Sir Alfred Jones, K.C.M.G., the chief of the Elder Dempster steamship line, set out from Avonmouth in the "Port Antonio" for Jamaica, with the object of promoting further developments between Bristol and the West Indies by means of the Imperial Direct West India mail service. The occasion of his departure was unusually interesting, as it took place on the first anniversary of the sailing



of the first boat of the direct service carrying H: Majesty's mails to the Island of Jamaica from Avonmouth. The picture portrays the mails being embarked on the "Antonio's" sister ship, the "Port Royal," which arrived at Avonmouth on the day before the royal visit, and was inspected by Their Royal Highnesses, who were much interested in her banana cargo. The "Port Kingston," a steamer of larger size and splendid construction, has now been added to the Jamaican fleet, and she makes the passage from Kingston to Bristol in ten-and-a-half days. By a coincidence, when Bristol was "feasting" on the 5th March, 1902—the Red Letter Day—and its senior Burgess, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, and the other Members of Parliament for the city were felicitating with a goodly array of Bristol Fathers over the great event likely to be fraught with untold benefit to the historic port from which Sebastian Cabot set forth years and years ago to seek and find the continent of America, the feast of "St. Martin's" was being held at the Criterion, in London, and the Post Office K.C.B.'s, Sir George Murray, Sir



EMBARKING MAILS AT AVONMOUTH ON THE JAMAICAN STEAMER, "PORT ROYAL."



Spencer Walpole, and Sir William Preece, under the courtly presidency of Sir Robert Hunter, were eloquently descanting to a large assemblage of Post Office *literati* on the usefulness of the Post Office Service magazine—St. Martin's le Grand.

The Chamber of Commerce at this time urged on the Canadian Government the desirability of making Bristol the terminal port for the new Canadian fast mail service, on the grounds that mails and passengers from Canada can be carried into London and the Midlands in the shortest period of time *via* the old port of Bristol. From the Holms, 20 miles below Bristol, a straight line in deep water, without any intervening land, may be drawn to Halifax: Bristol can be reached from London in 2 hours: The time which could be saved in the passage from Queenstown to London *via* Bristol is 5½ hours as compared with the route *via* Liverpool, and 5 hours as compared with the route *via* Southampton. By the Severn Tunnel line there is also direct communication with the Lancashire and Yorkshire manufacturing districts, as well as the Midland and



Northern parts of the United Kingdom generally. Thus in the two important elements of speed and safety Bristol has paramount advantages as a terminal port for the transatlantic mail service. There is evidence generally that Bristol trade and commerce have revived, and are now indicating a vigorous growth. The Bristol post office statistics show a phenomenal progress during the last decade. In the year 1837, before the introduction of the penny postage system, and when people had to pay for their missives on delivery, Bristol could only boast of 1,040,000 letters delivered in a year; in 1841, the year after the uniform penny postage was introduced, the number rose to 2,392,000. In another ten years, 1851, 5,668,000 was reached; in 1861, 11,062,252 was the number; 1871, 12,158,000; in 1881, 19,484,000; 1891, 29,000,000; and in 1901, 55,473,000, or an increase approaching that of the preceding forty years. The numbers stand in 1905 at 73,000,000.

On Sunday, the 10th January, 1904, the liner "Philadelphia" (which, by-the-bye, as the "City of Paris" went ashore on the Manacles and was salved and re-named) was the first of the fleet



of the American Line to call at Plymouth and land the American mails there, instead of at Southampton, as formerly. In connection with the inauguration of this service to the Western port of Plymouth, Bristol—undoubtedly a natural geographical centre for the distribution of mails from the United States and Canada—played an important part in distributing and thus greatly accelerating the delivery of the American correspondence generally. Bristol itself distinctly benefits by the American mail steamers calling at Plymouth, for it enables her traders to get their business correspondence many hours earlier than by any other route.

Owing to a severe storm encountered off Sandy Hook, the "Philadelphia," on the occasion alluded to, due on Saturday, did not arrive in Plymouth Sound until early on Sunday morning. The mails were quickly placed aboard the tender, which returned to Millbay Docks at 6.20 a.m., and an hour later the special G.W.R. train moved out, carrying over 21 tons of mails. Eight tons were at 10 a.m. put out at the Temple Meads Railway Station



to be dealt with at the Bristol Post Office, and the remainder taken on to Paddington. The mails dealt with at Bristol included not only those for delivery in Bristol city and district, but also those for the provinces. They were speedily sorted and dispersed by the comprehensive through train services to the West, South Wales, Midlands, and North of England.

The second American mail was brought over by the "St. Louis," which arrived off Plymouth at one o'clock on Saturday morning, the 16th January, 1904. The G.W. train reached Temple Meads at 6.23, and 350 bags which had to be dealt with at Bristol were dropped. The premises recently acquired from the Water Works Company by the Post Office were utilized for the first time, there not being sufficient room in the existing post office buildings to cope with such a heavy consignment. The letters were sent out with the first morning delivery in Bristol. The Birmingham letters were despatched at 10.30 a.m., and those for Manchester and Liverpool were also sent off in time for delivery in the afternoon.

The third mail arrived per "New York," at



7.35 p.m. on Saturday, the 23rd January, 1904: One hundred and fifty bags were deposited at Bristol. The New York direct mails for the North went on by the 7.40 p.m. (G.W.) and 7.55 p.m. (Mid.) trains ex Bristol Station. The direct Plymouth and Bristol service is still being continued.

In an Instruction Book relating to "Ship Letter" Duty which was in use in the Bristol Post Office so far back as 1833, there are many interesting documents. The following is a list:— (1) Ship Letters, Notice, G.P.O., July, 1833: (2) Notice to all Masters and Commanders of Ships arriving from abroad; Signed, Francis Freeling, Secretary G.P.O., June, 1835. (3) Letter from Francis Freeling to G. Huddlestone, 9th October, 1835, *re* letters forwarded by the ship "Paragon" from the Port of Bristol. (4) Letter from Ship Letter Office, London, to Postmaster of Bristol *re* Inland prepaid rate and Captain's gratuity (18th Sept., 1843). (5) Correspondence from G. Huddlestone (26th July, 1838) *re* Process of Receipt of Ship Letters, and making up of the mails; also Process of Receipt



and Distribution of Ship Letters Inward. (6) Notice to the Public and Instructions to all Postmasters; signed W. L. Maberly, Secretary G.P.O., 2nd September, 1840. (7) Receipt from Postmaster of Bristol for 1 packet directed "O.H.M.S. Ship Mail, per 'Victory'" from Bristol to Cork (Sept. 17th, 1841). (8) Letter containing Solicitor's opinion that Master of steam vessel cannot be compelled to sign receipt Ship Letter; signed Jas. Campbell (4th October, 1841). (9) Notice to Postmasters; signed W. L. Maberly, Secretary G.P.O., June, 1845. (10) Circular of Instructions; signed Rowland Hill, G.P.O., 4th October, 1845. (11) Notice to the Commanders of Ships arriving from Foreign Ports; signed W. L. Maberly, Secretary G.P.O., June, 1845: (12) Circular of Instructions; signed Rowland Hill, Secretary G.P.O., July, 1855: (13) Circular of Instructions to Postmasters at the Outports; signed Rowland Hill, Secretary G.P.O., 13th August, 1855. (14) Circular of Instructions; signed Rowland Hill, Secretary G.P.O., 29th January, 1857. (15) Reduction of the Ship Letter Rate of Postage; signed Row-



land Hill, Secretary G.P.O., 26th December, 1857. (16) Circular of Instructions; signed Rowland Hill, Secretary G.P.O., January 14th, 1858. (17) Instructions; signed Rowland Hill, Secretary G.P.O., 27th March, 1863. (18) *Re* Letters to Portugal; signed Geo. Dumeldenger, for Sub. Con., 7th March, 1871. (19) Note *re* Loose Letters, 23rd March, 1876. Bristol, 9th December, 1902.

This old book relating to the Ship Letter Duty at Bristol was considered suitable for the Muniment Room at St. Martin's-le-Grand, as an historical record, and is retained there for preservation. It is considered fortunate that it has survived so long.

As the public eye was for a long time directed towards the Redland Post Office, Bristol, which to meet the wants of the community has been located by the Department at No. 112, White Ladies Road, Black Boy Hill, and is carried on apart altogether from any trade or business, it may be well, in view of connecting links with the past being rapidly effaced in the march of modern progress, to take an historical retrospect of this local post



office so far as evidence is forthcoming, and thus endeavour to put on record the traditions of the past. It would appear, then, according to the earliest evidence obtainable, that Mr. W. Newman had the appointment of postman and town letter receiver conferred upon him in 1827, offices which he held until 1872. The post office was carried on by him in a small house approached by garden and steps immediately adjoining the old King's Arms Inn, which stood on the site of the present Inn of that name. It was Newman's mission in those pre-penny stamp days to serve the wide and then open district bordered by Pembroke Road, White Ladies Gate, Cold Harbour Farm, Redland Green, Red House Farm, Stoke Bishop, Cote House, and Sea Mills. He delivered about 40 letters daily. The area owing to the growth of population and the spread of education, with the consequent development of letter writing, has now seven post offices; is served by no fewer than 30 postmen, and has a delivery of 14,000 letters.

In Mr. Newman's early Post Office days mail coaches ran up and down Black Boy Hill on





MR. F. P. LANSDOWN.



their way to and from the New Passage, and called at the Redland Post Office. Newman is said to have had a jackdaw. The bird, as the mail coach ran down the narrow road on Black Boy Hill, called "Mail, mail, quick, quick!" to attract his master's attention, and, waggish bird as he was, he not infrequently gave a false alarm, and called his master at the wrong time. After some years Mr. Newman moved with the Post Office to the east side of Black Boy Hill, to a house near the present Porter Stores. He was succeeded by Mr. Enoch Park. The next sub-postmaster was the late Mr. Buswell, who for some years occupied premises on mid-hill, before moving the Post Office to a site lower down the hill.

Mr. F. P. Lansdown retired from the post of Medical Officer to the Bristol Post Office at the end of the year 1903. He had occupied the position for the period of 42 years, and it was felt that such long service could not be allowed to terminate without due recognition at the hands of the officers of the Postal and Telegraph Services, to whom he had rendered professional aid



from time to time. He was, therefore, given a solid silver table lamp, subscribed for by over 650 members of the staff. The presentation took place on Post Office premises, and was very largely attended.

Twenty-seven of the Bristol telegraph staff served in the campaign in South Africa. In times of peace many Royal Engineers are employed in the instrument room of the Bristol Post Office, and the duties of linesmen are mainly undertaken by men from that corps. On the outbreak of hostilities, these were at once withdrawn for active service, and then came the call for Volunteers for the Telegraph Battalion, when seven civilians attached to the local staff volunteered, and were selected. Great interest was taken by their confreres in the progress of the war, especially during the siege and the relief of Ladysmith, where two of the Bristol R.E.'s were among the besieged. One of the staff went through the siege of Kimberley, and another for his pluck was awarded the D.S. Medal. A hearty welcome awaited their return, and this was manifested by means of a supper and



musical evening at St. Stephen's Restaurant, Dec. 1, 1902.

Not all of them came back—two had fallen and helped to swell the large number who had sacrificed their lives for their King and country.

Whilst civilian telegraphists and officers of the sorting department thus volunteered for military service in South Africa, the present Postmaster-General himself, Lord Stanley, to whom this book is dedicated, also was not slow in placing himself at the disposal of his country, and he went through two years of the campaign, acting first as Press Censor and afterwards as Private Secretary to the Commander-in-Chief Lord Roberts. He was twice mentioned in despatches and was awarded the Companionship of the Bath.

Bristolians generally, with great enthusiasm, rallied to the cry for Volunteers, and special mention may here be made of Mr. J. Paul Bush, who ungrudgingly gave up his large and fashionable practice as a surgeon in Clifton, and, at very brief notice, hurried off to South Africa to occupy the position of senior surgeon to the Princess Christian Hospital.



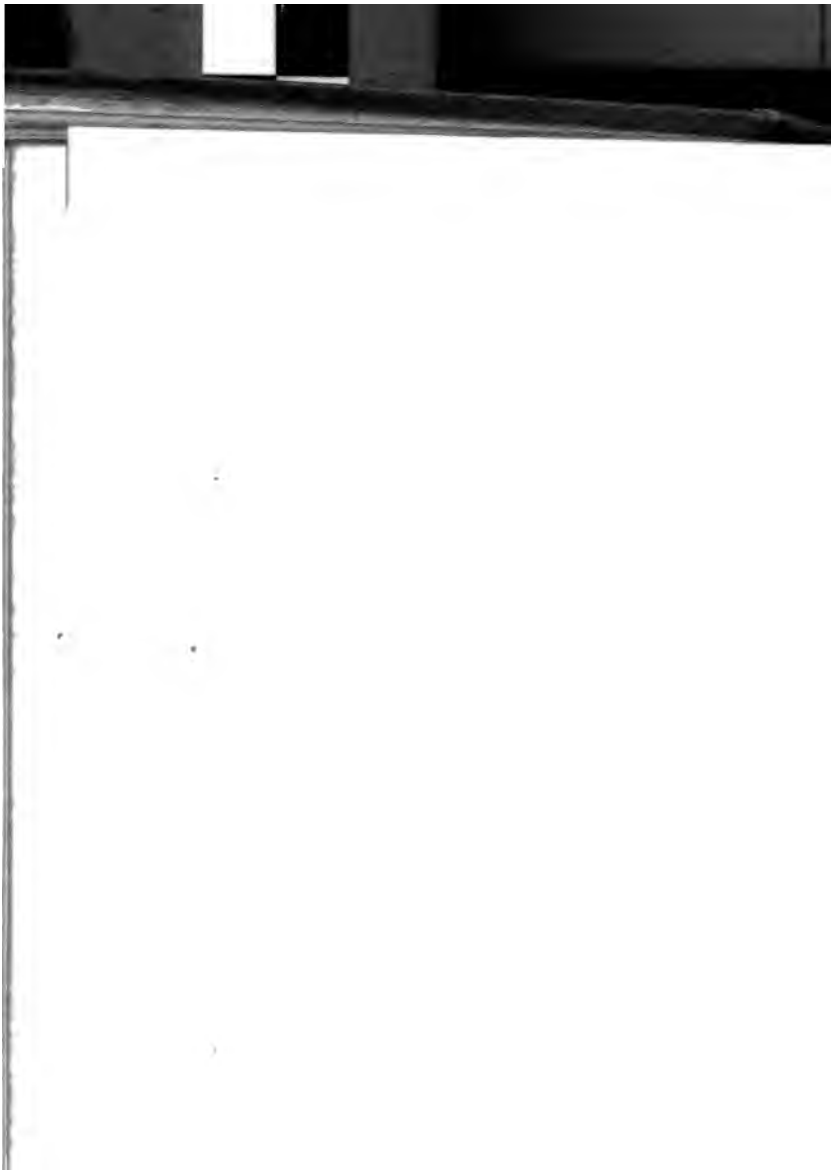
He was mentioned by Lord Roberts in despatches, and the Companionship of the Order of St. Michael and St. George was conferred on him.

Small wonder then, that on Mr. Lansdown's retirement from the Bristol Medical Officership at the end of 1903, Lord Stanley should have selected Mr. Paul Bush to fill the appointment.

Mr. Bush had the further claim to the appointment as being a medical man born in the city of Bristol, and having for an ancestor Paul Bush, the first Bishop of Bristol, who was born in 1491. He is the son of the late Major Robert Bush, 96th Regiment, who was particularly patriotic in having largely assisted in the formation of the 1st Bristol Rifle Volunteer Corps, of which he became Colonel in command. In addition to certain honorary medical and surgical appointments in the city, Mr. Bush holds the position of chief surgeon to the Bristol Constabulary.



MR. J. PAUL BUSH, C.M.G.





CHAPTER XIV.

SMALL (THE POST OFFICE) STREET, BRISTOL: ITS ANCIENT HISTORY, INFLUENTIAL RESIDENTS, HISTORIC HOUSES; THE CANNS; THE EARLY HOME OF THE ELTON FAMILY.

FROM time immemorial Small Street, in the city and county of Bristol, two-thirds of the west side of which the Post Office occupies, has been an important street. One of the nine old town gates was at the bottom of it, and was known as St. Giles's Gate, having obtained this name from a church dedicated to St. Giles, the patron saint of cripples and beggars, which in the fifteenth century stood at the end of "Seynt-Lauren's-Laane." Here, history says, was the "hygest walle of Bristow," which has "grete vowtes under it, and the old chyrch of Seynt Gylys was byldyd ovyr the vowtes." The cutting of the trench, from the old Stone Bridge to near Prince Street Bridge, for the new channel of the Froom, was completed in 1247. Before this



date ships could only lie in the Avon, where the bottom was "very stony and rough"; but the bed of the new course of the Froom having turned out to be soft and muddy, it became the harbour for the great ships, and Small Street from this time became a principal thoroughfare: Then to this quarter of the town came Bristol's greatest merchants. From the centre of the town to the old Custom House, at the lower end of Pylle Street (now St. Stephen Street) there was no nearer way than down Small Street and through St. Giles's Gate. The existence of gardens in the 15th and 16th centuries at the backs of the Houses in Small Street is evidenced by the wills of old Bristolians. In that of William Hoton, merchant, of St. Werburgh's parish, who died in 1475, is mentioned "the garden of Sir Henry Hungerford, Knight," near the cemetery of St. Leonard's Church, and John Easterfield, merchant, of St. Werburgh's parish, who died in 1504, bequeathed to his wife his dwelling-house in Small-Strete, and also "the garden in St. Leonard's Lane, as long as she dwelleth in the said house."





ELTON MANSION, SMALL STREET, BRISTOL.



In this historic Small Street, and just within the old city walls, have for two or three hundred years stood certain premises, in olden times divided into three separate holdings, the freehold of which was purchased in 1903 from the Bristol Water Works Company by the Post Office, for much-needed extensions to its already large building. The facts respecting these three edifices have been culled from ancient parchments which would fill a large wheelbarrow. The premises are not of very ornate exterior now. They are interesting, however, as denoting an old style of architecture; but the exteriors have, no doubt, been so altered and pulled about to meet the requirements of successive occupiers as to be not quite like what they were originally. The structures appear to have been erected in the middle of the 17th century, probably at the end of the reign of King Charles I. (1649). The plan of Brightstowe, published in 1581 by Hofnagle, shows that the Church of St. Werburgh and its churchyard occupied one-third of the frontage of the street, on the west, or Post Office, side, and that



there were only five other separate buildings, which were each detached, and covered the remainder of the length of the street. Millerd's "Exact Delineations of the famous Cittie of Bristoll," published in 1673, does not so clearly illustrate the houses standing in Small Street on its west or Post Office side as could be desired. The deeds hereafter alluded to indicate, however, that of the three premises under consideration, the Elton Mansion, at least, was standing before 1680, as Richard Streamer, who died in that year, is named as having formerly dwelt therein. There is no earlier record, and as Streamer only came to fame as councillor in 1661, it may, perhaps, be assumed that the mansion was erected about the year 1650; and as a member of the Cann family is the first known owner of the property, no doubt the house was erected for him. The style of architecture appears to bear out that assumption as to date, and the frontages indicate that the three houses under special review were erected about the same time.

While there may be a little regret when these



mediæval buildings disappear, there will be the advantage of the street being considerably widened by their removal. It is now only 20 feet wide from house to house, and gives a very good idea of its appropriate appellation—Small Street. Taking first the property which formed the middle holding, now (1905) known as 7, Small Street, and which was not, therefore, actually contiguous to the existing Post Office, the earliest date alluded to in the parchments is the year 1700. In a deed of the 14th August, 1723, it is stated that Sir Abraham Elton, merchant, under indenture of lease dated 28th February, 1700, had bought from Sir Thomas Cann, of Stoke Bishopp, in the county of Gloucester, Esq., "All that great messuage or dwelling-house situate standing and being in Small Street within the Parishes of St: Walburgh (*sic*) and St. Leonard." The indenture was between Sir Abraham Elton, Bart., on the one part, and Christopher Shuter, of the same city, on the other part, and was worded thus: "Now this Indenture witnesseth that for and in consideration of the sum of five shillings of lawful money



of Great Britain to the said Sir Abraham Elton in hand paid by the said Christopher Shuter the receipt whereof the said Sir Abraham Elton doth hereby confess and acknowledge and for divers good causes and considerations him the said Sir Abraham Elton hereunto moving hath granted bargained sold assigned and set over unto the said Christopher Shuter all the said messuage and tenements to have and to hold unto the said Christopher Shuter his executors administrators and assigns from henceforth for and during all the rest and residue of the above recited terms of 70 years which is yet to run and unexpired in trust for said Sir Abraham Elton."

The next record is that bearing date of the next day, thus:—"Mr. Cann's lease for a year of a Messuage in Small Street to Sir Abraham Elton. Date 15th August, 1723." Robert Cann "doth demise grant bargain and sell unto the said Sir Abraham Elton all that great messuage or dwelling house situate standing and being in Small Street within the parishes of St. Walburgh and St. Leonards or one of them within



the said city of Bristol wherein Richard Streamer Esq. (who died in 1680) formerly dwelt and wherein Sir William Poole, Knt. (no trace of him can be found in local records) afterwards dwelt and now (1723) the dwelling of and in the possession of the said Sir Abraham Elton (First Baronet) (where also Sir Abraham Elton, the grandson, successively dwelt, and, after that, William Thornhill, surgeon) and fronting forwards to the street called Small Street and extending backwards to a lane called St. Leonard's Lane and bounded on the outside thereof with a messuage in the holding of William Donne, Ironmonger, and afterwards (1746) John Perks, Tobacconist (now 1905, known as No. 6 in Small Street and actually adjoining the Post Office) and on the other side thereof with a messuage in the tenure of William Knight Cooper (and afterwards of Richard Lucas, Cooper) (now 1905, known as No. 8 Small Street and last occupied by Messrs. Bartlett and Hobbs, Wine Merchants), togeather with all and singular Cellars, Sellars Vaults, Rooms, Halls, Parlors, Chambers, Kitchens, Lofts, Lights, Basements, Backsides,



pavements, court yards and appurtenances whatsoever"—for one whole year, yielding and paying therefor the rent of a peppercorn on the feast of St. Michael the Archangel (if the same shall be demanded). Signed and sealed, Robert Cann. In the Abstract of Title it is noted that William Knight, who occupied the house on the "other side," was succeeded in the tenure by Richard Lucas, cooper. On the 14th August, 1746, Sir Abraham Elton (3rd Bart.) and assignees leased the premises as before described to Dr. Logan, of the city of Bristol, doctor in physick, for 5s., as in the case of Christopher Shuter. The house of William Donne, ironmonger, adjoining, was in this deed mentioned as occupied by John Perks, tobacconist. The property appears to have been sold by William Logan, of Pennsylvania, Esq., and nephew and heir of the above-mentioned Dr. Logan, doctor of physick, of the city of Bristol, to the "Small Street Company (Richard Reynolds, Edward Garlick, Richard Summers, James Harford, William Cowles, James Getly)" on the 27th May, 1772. In the year 1847 the property was leased



to the Bristol Water Works Company, and purchased by the company in 1865.

The several owners and occupiers of this "great house" were persons of no mean degree, as the following statement of their local positions indicates. According to Playfair's "British Family Antiquity," Vol. VII., Mr. Robert Cann was the eldest son of Sir Thomas Cann, who was the eldest son of Sir Robert Cann, the first baronet. Sir Robert Cann was the eldest son of William Cann, Esqr., Alderman of Bristol. He married the sister of Sir Robert Yeomans, who was beheaded at Bristol for supporting the cause of Charles I. Sir Robert was Councillor, 1649–1663; Sheriff, 1651–1652; Treasurer, Merchant Venturers, 1653–1654; Master, Merchant Venturers, 1658–1659; Mayor, 1662–1663; Knighted, 1662; created Baronet, 1662; Alderman 1663–1685; Mayor, 1675–1676. Under the south window of St. Werburgh's Church was a handsome monument, with a half-arch, for the family of Sir Robert Cann, of Compton-Greenfield, Bart. Richard Streamer was Councillor, 1661–1672; Sheriff, 1663–1664; Alderman, 1672–1680; Mayor



1673–1674; Master, Merchant Venturers, 1672–1673; died 1680. Sir William Pool cannot be traced in the local histories which have been consulted. Sir Abraham Elton (first baronet), baptized 3 July, 1654, at St. Philip and St. Jacob Church, was the son of Isaac and Elizabeth Elton, of that parish. From entries in the registers, it may be seen that the family was settled there as early as 1608, about which time the members of it migrated from near Ledbury to the neighbourhood, attracted doubtless by the splendid field for enterprise offered by the second City of the Kingdom, as Bristol undoubtedly was at that period, and for some time afterwards. They were Puritans, and held some land in Barton Regis on the Gloucestershire side of the city. Richard Elton, bap. at St. Philip and St. Jacob, 29 April, 1610, was a Colonel in Fairfax's Army, and he published one of the earliest text books in the English language on military tactics; hence the family motto, "Artibus et Armis." A copy of this book is now in Clevedon Court Library, with its quaint frontispiece, portrait and inscription: "Richard Elton, of Bristol, 1649, aetas suae 39."



[*From an original painting at Clevedon Co*

A. E.

THE FIRST SIR ABRAHAM ELTON, BART.









[*From an original painting at Clevedon Court.*

M. E.

MARY, WIFE OF THE FIRST ABRAHAM ELTON, BART.



Sir Abraham was apprenticed in 1670 to his eldest brother, Jacob Elton, but in 1672 went to sea. He married in 1676 Mary, daughter of Robert Jefferies, a member of a well-known mercantile family of that day. He served in many public offices, thus :—President, Gloucestershire Society, 1689; Councillor, 1699–1712; Sheriff, 1702–1703; Master, Merchant Venturers, 1708–1709; Mayor, 1710–1711; Alderman, 1712–1728; Governor, Incorporation of Poor, 1713–1715; High Sheriff of Gloucestershire, 1716; created baronet, 1717; Mayor, September, 1720; M.P., 1722–1727.

The portraits of Abraham and Mary Elton which are here given, are reproduced, with Sir Edmund Elton's kind consent, from photographs by Mr. Edwin Hazell, of Linden Road Studio, Clevedon. The original oil paintings hang in the picture gallery at Clevedon Court.

According to Barrett, in the St. Werburgh's vestry room, over the door on the inside, as part of a long Latin inscription, was the name of "Abrahamo Eltono, Guardianis, 1694." The baronetcy was conferred on him in recognition



of his staunch support of the Hanoverian succession during the Jacobite riots of 1715-16, to the great disgust of Stewart, the local Jacobite chronicler.

In the Board Room, at St. Peter's Hospital, under the date 1700, Abraham Elton's name appears as a benefactor for £100.

In 1727, Sir Abraham Elton, Bart., gave £2 10s. per annum to five poor housekeepers in St. Werburgh's parish not receiving alms, paid September 11, £50. He died at his house in Small Street in the same year—1727. Having bequeathed considerable sums in local charities, he settled his estates in Somerset, Gloucestershire, and Wilts, on various members of his family. He was for many years head of the commerce of Bristol, a pioneer of its brass and iron foundries, owner of its principal weaving industry, and of some of its glass and pottery works, besides largely controlling the shipping of the port. His wife survived him by only two months. They are both buried in the family vault in SS. Philip and Jacob Parish Church, within the altar rails near Sir Abraham's parents. The house in



Small Street was their town house from about 1690 down to the date of their deaths.

Sir Abraham Elton (second baronet), baptized 30 June, 1679, at St. John the Baptist, Broad Street, was Councillor, 1710–1723; Sheriff, 1710–1711; Mayor, 1719–1720; Master, Merchant Venturers, 1719–1720; Alderman, 1723–1742; baronet, 1727; M.P., 1727–1742; died October 19th, 1742. He married on the 14th of May, 1702, Abigail, daughter of Zachary Bayly, of Charlcot House, Wilts, and of Northwood Park, Somerset.

Sir Abraham Elton (third baronet), born 1703, was Councillor, 1728–1757; Sheriff, 1728–1729; Baronet, 1742; Mayor, 1742–1743; died November 29th, 1761. He died unwed.

Christopher Shuter was Councillor, 1699–1715; Sheriff, 1702–1703; Mayor, 1711–1712; Alderman, 1715–1730; Governor, Incorporation of Poor, 1715–1716; Warden, Merchant Venturers, 1718–1719; died 1730.

William Thornhill was surgeon to the Infirmary, 1737–1754.

William Logan was physician to the Infirmary, 1737–1757; died December, 1757, aged 69.



The neighbours on the right and left of the Elton mansion, mentioned hereafter, were not of great social consequence. There is, however, mention of one of them, a John Knight, having been warden of the Merchant Venturers' Society in 1671–2.

The other premises (6 and 8—1903) stand on the upper and lower sides respectively of the old Elton Mansion. They belonged in 1709 to Eleanor Seager, who mortgaged them to Edward Cook for £140. The property was described in the mortgage deed thus :—

" All those two messuages or tenements situate and being in Small Street in the Parish of St. Walburg (*sic*) in the City of Bristol in one (No. 6—1905) of which said messuages John Knight Gent now liveth and in the other of them (No. 8—1905) one M. E. Balley now doth or lastly did inhabit and dwell, in the said City of Bristol and all houses, outhouses, edifices, buildings, courtyards, and backsides to the said messuage or tenement."

The two messuages were leased to Mary Knight by Eleanor Seager for 1s. in money by



GARGOYLE IN ELTON MANSION WALL.

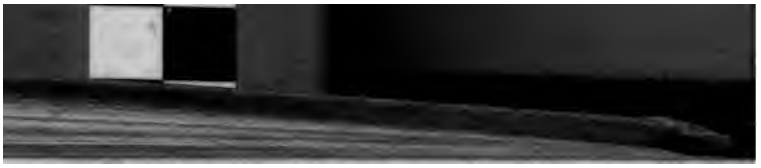




indenture of 26 June, 1716, thus :—" Between John Saunders of Hazell in the parish of Olveston in the County of Gloucester, Esq., and Eleanora his wife the only daughter and heirs of William Seager late of Hazell aforesaid on the one part and Mary Knight of the city of Bristol widow, on the other part.

" hath granted bargained sold all these two several messuages or tenements situate being in Small Street in one of which said messuages or tenements John Knight, deceased, formerly dwelt and wherein the said Mary Knight his widow doth now dwell and in the other of them Thomas Balley Painter and Glazier doth also dwell (afterwards in tenure or occupation of John Mason Broker and Thomas Taman Gunsmith) and all the outhouses," &c., &c., &c. (as in 1709 mortgage deed).

In 1758 (24 June) there was a conveyance of the two messuages from Miss Knight to Mr. Samuel Page (one of the partners with Edward Garlick, Richard Reynolds, &c.) for £700. It was this same firm which purchased the Elton " Great House " in 1772.



The firm was known as Messrs. Reynolds, Getley and Company, by virtue of an indenture of co-partnership, dated 1st June, 1764. The document was signed and sealed by Richard Reynolds, Edward Garlick, Richard Summers, James Harford, William Cowles, James Getley, Samuel Page, William Weaver, John Partridge, and John Partridge, jun. The firm was engaged in the iron and tin-plate trades, and, according to the *London Gazette* of Saturday, March 17th, 1820, it was being carried on under the style of Harfords, Crocker, and Co. The partnership dissolved on the 30th day of June, 1821, by Alicia Calder, Elizabeth Weaver, and Sarah Davies retiring from the firm, and by reason of the death of the Philip Crocker. The business was continued by Richard Summers Harford, Samuel Harford, John Harford, William Green, and William Weaver Davies, under the firm of Harford Brothers and Co., under the date of 25th day of February, 1822.

These two tenements became the property of the Bristol Water Works Company at the same time as the Great House, in 1865, and a portion





CHIMNEY-PIECE IN ELTON MANSION, SMALL STREET, BRISTOL.



of ground at the back, facing St. Leonard's Lane, belonging to the St. Werburgh's charities, in 1902.

The old chimney-piece—a fine specimen of mediæval stone carving—which stood in the principal upstairs room of No. 7, used as a board-room by the Water Works Company, the richly decorated ceiling, and the panelled walls, marked the period at which the Eltons occupied the house; and the initials A. and M. E., representing Abraham and Mary Elton (Mary, daughter of Robert Jefferies, whom he married in 1676), and the date, 1700, quaintly cut, are on the chimney-piece. The chimney-piece has been removed, and re-erected in the new Water Works building in Telephone Avenue. The inquirer of the far-distant future may be misled when he finds it in this spot, unless, indeed, there be some tablet provided to indicate and perpetuate the history of this antique stone carving. The ceiling and panelling have been purchased by Sir Edmund Elton, and taken to Clevedon Court.

In letters to the *Bristol Times and Mirror* newspaper, certain writers have, in treating of the

Water Works premises, sought to establish that the great philanthropist, Edward Colston, possessed a mansion on the east side of Small Street, and lived therein. No tangible facts have, however, been adduced to substantiate the statements. On the other hand, there is very conclusive evidence to the contrary contained in the notes on "Colston's House," read at the annual meeting of this society, in 1890, by the late historian of Bristol, John Latimer. Mr. Latimer demonstrated, beyond doubt, that Thomas Colston purchased the mansion of the Creswicks, on the west side of Small Street, upon the site of which the present Post Office stands. It was in that house that Edward Colston resided, if, indeed, at any time he ever did live for more than a short period at one time in Small Street.

When King Charles II. as Prince of Wales accompanied his father to Bristol, and the Court was located in Small Street on that very site, probably he rode into, and about, the city in a coach such as is given in the illustration at page 23, but there is no doubt, that in later days, after



[*From a painting in the Merchant Venturers' Hall, Bristol.*

EDWARD COLSTON, 1636–1721.

(Copyright.)







[*By permission of Mr. John Lane, The Bodley Head, Vigo St., London.*

CHARLES II.

(From "After Worcester Fight," by Allen Fea.)



the Battle of Worcester, he rode in on horseback as a fugitive on his way to Abbotsleigh. His start on the long journey from Boscobel mounted on the Miller's pony, sans wig and sans royal garb, was not altogether dignified, although the incident here depicted is not wanting in pathetic interest, as indicating the attachment to His Majesty of the five faithful Penderel brothers.

In a report to the General Board of Health on a preliminary enquiry into the sewerage, drainage, and supply of water, and the sanitary conditions of the inhabitants of the City and County of Bristol in 1850, it was stated in a petition from Messrs. H. J. J. Hinton & Son, Small Street, "There is a filthy lane, called Leonard's Lane, near the bottom of Small Street, and which leads round into Corn Street. The state of it, in a general way, is so bad as to be quite sufficient to produce pestilence."

According to the report the Parish of St. Werburgh contained 30 houses. Its population in 1841 was 99, and its area was 300 square yards. It had one burial ground, and the

average number of interments was 5 per annum. Leaden coffins were always required.

The "Inspector of Lamps, etc.", reported that there were 21 houses in Small Street.



[By permission of Mr. John Lane, The Bodley Head, Vigo Street, London.

CHARLES II. AFTER BATTLE OF WORCESTER ON ROAD TO BRISTOL.

(From "After Worcester Fight," by Allen Fea.)





CHAPTER XV.

THE POST OFFICE TRUNK TELEPHONE SYSTEM AT BRISTOL. —THE COLUMBIA STAMPING MACHINE.

THE Post Office in Bristol commenced to undertake telephone business in 1896. It began with trunk telephone lines working to Bath, Birmingham, Cardiff, Exeter, London, Taunton, and Weston-super-Mare. At the outset the conversations averaged about 170 daily. In that same year the department took over from the National Telephone Co., Cardiff, Gloucester, Newport and Sharpness lines, and the conversations soon increased to nearly 400 per day. At the present time the department has from 1 to 5 (according to size of town) trunk lines to Bath, Bradford-on-Avon, Birmingham, Cardiff, Exeter, Gloucester, London, Lydney, Plymouth, Newport, Sharpness, Southampton, Swansea, Taunton, Tiverton, and Weston-super-Mare. An increased number of wires has had marked



effect in diminishing the delays which at first occurred through paucity of trunk lines, but as the business is constantly increasing, the department is still looked to for additional lines. That the better accommodation is appreciated, however, is indicated by the fact that now the Bristol conversations average nearly 1,500 a day, or considerably over a quarter of a million a year. On Sundays the trunk telephones are available, but use is made of them only to a small extent, there being only about 150 conversations per Sunday. The total number of trunk wire transactions throughout the kingdom during the last year, according to the Postmaster General's annual report, was 13,467,975, or, reckoning each transaction as involving at least two spoken messages, a total number of 26,935,950 (an increase of 16.3 per cent. over that of the preceding year). The revenue was £325,525 (an increase of 18.4 per cent.), and the average value of each transaction was 5s. 8d. There is a silence box in the Public Hall of the Bristol Post Office, from which conversations can be held with all parts of the King-



dom, with Belgium and France. Of course, the greater number of trunk line telephone conversations are held through the medium of the National Telephone Company's local exchange, but many important Bristol firms have contracted with the Post Office for private telephone wires in actual connection with the trunk line system, independent altogether of the National Co.'s exchange.

The intermingling of the National Telephone business with that of the Post Office telegraphs has had a further development in a system under which subscribers to the National Company telephone communications to the Post Office to be sent on thence as telegrams over Post Office telegraph wires. This privilege is taken advantage of at Bristol to the extent of seven or eight hundred messages weekly. The accession of the trunk telephone business to the already over-crowded office has had the effect of necessitating the detachment of some part of the staff from the Post Office headquarter premises in Small Street, and the friendly relations between the Telephone Company and the Post Office



have been further strengthened by the Bristol Post Office having taken certain rooms in the headquarters of the National Telephone Co., and located its Returned Letter Office therein.

Another new feature in Post Office development is the use of Stamping Machines for the rapid obliteration of the postage stamps and for the impression of the day's date on letters. Quite recently a machine of the kind has been introduced into the Bristol Post Office. The machine, which is of modern invention, goes by the name of the "Columbia" Cancelling Machine, and is manufactured by the Columbia Postal Supply Company, of Silver Creek, New York, U.S.A. It is said to be in use in many Post Offices in the large towns of America and other countries. The public will no doubt have noticed the new cancelling marks on the postage stamps, as the die and long horizontal lines are very striking. The cancelling and date marking operation is performed at the rate of 400 or 500 letters per minute. The motor power of the machine is electricity.



COLUMBIA STAMPING MACHINE.



CHAPTER XVI.

THE POST OFFICE BENEVOLENT SOCIETY: ITS ANNUAL MEETING AT BRISTOL.—POST OFFICE SPORTS: TERRIBLE MOTOR CYCLE ACCIDENT.—BRISTOL POST OFFICE IN DARKNESS.

THE United Kingdom Postal and Telegraph Service Benevolent Society held its Biennial meeting at Bristol, in June, 1903, and a Banquet was given by the Bristol Branch to the members of the Conference.

Such a visit to Bristol occurs only once in about 20 years, so it was regarded as an event of no small importance in the local Post Office community; and it is, perhaps, worthy on that account of record in this publication, which aims to be somewhat historical in character. In the following account of the Banquet there has been withdrawn the seasoning of the "hear, hear," "laughter," "applause," "loud cheers," etc. The reader can add it to his or her liking.



The attendance at the Banquet was large, and the guests closely filled the large central hall of the Royal Hotel, College Green. The High Sheriff, Mr. Weston Stevens, presided, and amongst those present were the Lord Bishop of Bristol, Colonel C. E. H. Hobhouse, M.P., Rev. A. N. Blatchford, Messrs. J. McMurtrie, S. Humphries, R. C. Tombs, I.S.O. (Postmaster and Surveyor of Bristol), E. Bennett, J. T. Francombe, J. Asher, J. C. Gilmore, L. J. Botting (the Bristol Central Secretary), E. C. Taylor (the Chairman of Conference), and many others.

The speeches were interesting as throwing a light on the Post Office working, and on Post Office benevolence.

When he received the invitation to attend that dinner, Mr. Francombe said, he was at a loss to know why he should be so honoured. He thought that possibly some gentleman engaged in the dead-letter office knew he was a member of the Education Committee of Bristol, and that he might give a hint to the rising generation to write better, and so save him a great deal of trouble. If that was the reason, he certainly



would attend to it. Afterwards he said he knew why it was; it was because Sir Francis Freeling was born in Redcliff, where he (Mr. Francombe) happened to be schoolmaster of the parish. Sir Francis worked his way up to high rank in the Postal Service, which was something to be proud of. He hoped members of the Conference would not go away from Bristol without visiting Redcliff Church and seeing the slab to his memory. But his duty was to propose the toast of the Bishop and ministers of religion of that ancient city. They did not know as much about the Bishop as he should like them to know: They in Bristol believed him to be physically, mentally, and spiritually fit to be a leader in the great city. He believed the work of a Bishop was something like that of a policeman—not altogether a happy one. His Lordship attended many functions, gave a fillip to every one of them, and all he said was reported and saved up ready to be cast in his teeth sometimes. If he were of a tender disposition he would say, "I could weep my spirit from mine eyes." But he was not one of that sort. His toast was



"Ministers of Religion." He thought it would have been "Ministers of all denominations." There was one denomination in Bristol that had no ministers, and it went on wonderfully well. He referred to the Society of Friends. He was sure His Lordship would agree. They only spoke when *the* spirit moved them, but a good many spoke when *a* spirit moved them. Some denominations were better without a minister, and some ministers would be better without denominations. In the city of Bristol there was room enough for all, and they need not spend time in attacking each other, but might do the work God sent them to do. They had one present that night—a broad-minded gentleman who did his work like the Bishop, and minded his business, and did not interfere with other people—Mr. Blatchford.

They always listened in Bristol with special pleasure to a speech from their friend Mr. Francombe, the Lord Bishop said. He desired to thank Mr. Francombe for the pleasant manner in which he had spoken of him. The clergy and ministers had looked about in the world for the



faces that were on the side of right, besides the purely spiritual faces and spiritual work, and he was always thankful to think a great deal of good was done in the country by that great service represented that evening. Their army of postmen and employés of the Post Office were a very great factor indeed in keeping steady a State like their own. He always said the same of certain other bodies, but of the postmen it seemed to him they were so particularly careful about their business, they learned of necessity to be so sober and so well conducted, or they would lose their place, that he looked upon them and the railway men as two of the greatest civilising influences they had among them, apart from such work as Mr. Blatchford and he were called upon officially to do. He desired to express, on his own part, his extreme gratitude to those gentlemen for another reason—the wonderful accuracy with which they delivered the letters. That gentleman who laughed might once in his life have missed a letter addressed to him, but it did not happen to the Bishop. In the five and a half years he had been in Bristol, with a

large correspondence, he was not conscious of having lost one single letter. He should have been exceedingly glad if a good many had been lost. It so happened he gave the Post Office a good deal of trouble. He lived at a place called the Palace. Now Henry VIII. created a bishop's residence in Bristol, a palace, and it was supposed that a palace must mean something royal. The real fact was, the name was derived not from a king's palace but from that of a shepherd—a most suitable thing for a bishop. Henry VIII., besides creating his residence a palace, created Bristol a city in the same document. The name palace gave a certain amount of trouble, because there were palaces in some cities where other things than bishops were sold. There was a palace where a certain innocuous drink was sold, and letters sometimes went there. There was also a most delightful place of entertainment called the People's Palace in Bristol, and letters sometimes went there. When grave clergymen from a distance came to stay at his house they were occasionally driven up to the doors of the People's Palace,



and the cabmen expected that they were going to purchase tickets for the entertainment. A letter came to Bristol addressed "March 25th, Bristol." The Postmaster was puzzled at first. Then it occurred to him that the assizes were on, and Justice Day was the judge, and that his wife was Lady Day. He should like to tell them one thing more from history. Admirable as the Post Office was now, a little more than 1,200 years ago, a letter was sent to his predecessor, St. Aldhelm, from Ireland. The only address given was from an anonymous Scot. The letter said, "You have a book which it is only the business of a fortnight to read; I beg you to send it to me." That was all. He did not name the book. The Post Office in those days was so marvellous a thing that, as far as they knew, Aldhelm just took the book, put it in the post, addressed to an anonymous Scot, and he supposed it found its way to him in Ireland. He did not think they could beat that to-day. Few people knew how much the country was saved in taxation by people who had a large correspondence. Their letters were the most

agreeable and easy way of paying their taxes. When they came to see the Budget analysed it was surprising what a large amount of taxation was paid in this innocent way. He could not see how it was done. It seemed that the work for which a penny was charged must cost at least a penny. He could only understand it on the principle of the old Irish lady who lost on every single apple she sold, but, by the blessing of God, sold so many that she got a good living out of it.

He was not surprised, the Rev. A. N. Blatchford said, that the toast should be so heartily received in a city known as the city of churches. The Church had thrown herself from ancient time into the cause of the people; progress and religion had been indissolubly linked together.

In proposing the toast "The Postal and Telegraph Service," Mr. Sidney Humphries, J.P., present President of the Chamber of Commerce, said that when he was asked to propose the next toast on the list, his thoughts naturally turned to the reason for his being put forward to do this duty, and the only explanation that had occurred to him



was that having had the hardihood to be one of a deputation to the Postmaster-General quite recently, on the question of their local postal service, those who had had the arrangement of this function, Mikado like, had lured him to his punishment; but still, being in for it, many interesting thoughts had arisen. The first, as to the foresight of that Worcestershire schoolmaster, Rowland Hill, who, feeling the pinch of expense, made an agreement with his sweetheart to only write once a fortnight, the rates of postage in his early days varying from 2d. to 1s. in accordance with the distance at which they were separated. Fortunately, his thoughts were directed to the penny postage for all distances within the United Kingdom, and although many spoke of him as an over-sanguine dreamer, still events had proved his wisdom, and to-day they had a postal service that dealt with over 3,832 million letters, post-cards, and papers per annum, giving 91 per head of the population, as against 940 millions 33 years ago, with the comparatively small number of 30 per head then. Whilst speaking of the enormous growth



of the postal business, they must not lose sight of the wonderful growth of both the telegraph and Savings Bank business. The former, since it was taken over by Government in 1870, had more than justified that step, for in the following year—1871—the number of telegrams sent was 10 millions, whilst last year the number was well over 92 million messages. Then as regards the Savings Bank, they could flatter themselves as to the proof it furnished of the increased wealth of the country, for whilst the total Savings Bank capital in 1869 was 13½ millions, in 1901 it stood at over 140 millions. But whilst all this progress had been made, many helpful suggestions had been made by men of moderate position. Take, for instance, a time so long ago as 1784: the credit of first suggesting the mail coach was made by a Mr. Palmer, who was then the manager of the theatre in their neighbouring city of Bath. This was a great improvement as to speed and safety of delivery when compared with the old postboy; but think of the mail coach when compared with the mail trains that covered now over three millions of miles per

annum. But with all this progress there had been many other changes. Think of the notice that was issued to all postal employés in 1832, that none were to vote or advise electors how to vote. This was very different to running a candidate on postal lines, as was to take place at the next election at York. And in considering what for a better term he might call the commercial side of the question, there were instances that ought not to be overlooked in great numbers of devotion to duty—for example, take that of the Scotch mail carrier, who, feeling himself overcome by the gale and snow, hung his mail-bag on a tree so that the letters should not be lost, even if his life were sacrificed. Then this postal system seemed to develop a special shrewdness. One local case had been mentioned by the Bishop as having recently occurred, and there was another in which a pictorial address of Daniel in the lion's den found its rightful owner, who had become talked about by his visit to a menagerie just before. But in case they should all think that at last perfection had been reached, there was another circum-



stance that he could relate from his own personal experience. Wanting to send a parcel to Sir Michael Hicks-Beach, he foolishly sent it to his private address, at 40, Portman Square, instead of his official residence, he being Chancellor of Exchequer at the time, and judge of his own astonishment when he received an official announcement, "Cannot be delivered owing to address being unknown." But this did not tell against their Bristol friends, a body of men, he ventured to say, who for smartness and anxiety at all times to meet the various calls made upon them could not be surpassed, and therefore he called upon them all to drink heartily the toast of the Postal and Telegraph Service, coupling with it the name of their local Postmaster and Surveyor, who was always to the fore in anything that would help forward Bristol or Bristol interests.

In replying, the Postmaster thanked them all for the cordial reception of the toast of the Postal and Telegraph Services, and especially Mr. Humphries, the proposer, for the kind and considerate and genial way in which he had alluded



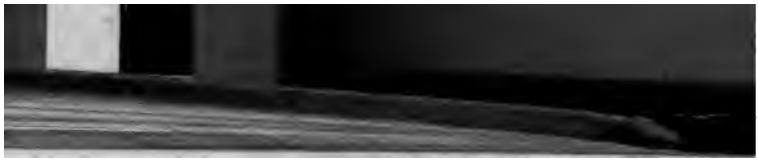




POSTMASTER OF BRISTOL.
(The Author).



to his department. In the first place, he wished to extend to the delegates assembled there—and they came from all parts of the United Kingdom, North, South, East, and West—the right hand of good comradeship. Welcome, delegates to Bristol, thrice welcome, he said. He supposed, in response to this important toast, they would expect that he should say something of the postal system. The Lord Bishop had taken them back some hundreds of years—1200 years back, when Bishop Aldhelm wrote a letter. He must go a little further back than that. His friend, Mr. Humphries, found a parallel in Holy Scripture—Daniel in the lion's den. He found in Holy Writ, the only book of ancient date he had to refer to, that posts and letters were of respectable antiquity. They would find recorded in Kings II. this passage in connection with the account of that pathetic incident of the little Israelitish maiden suggesting the means whereby Naaman might be cured—"Go to," said the King of Syria "I will send a letter to the King of Israel." In the wisdom of Solomon were the words, "My days are like a shadow that passeth away, and

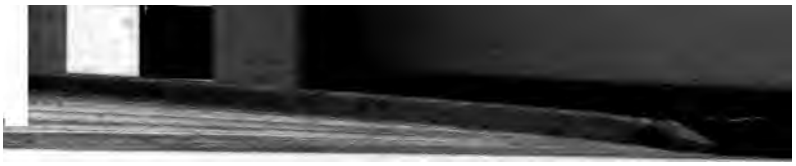


like the post that hasteth by." So they saw in those ancient days it was all hurry for the postman. He would skip a few thousand years and come to 1496. It was recorded that the means of communication in this country were almost non-existent, and news was carried to and fro by means of travelling merchants, pedlars, and pilgrims. In 1637 letter posts were established by Charles I. King Charles stopped in the building that stood on the site of their local St. Martin's-le-Grand, but little could he have thought that the day would come when it would be possible for a man to stand on that spot and speak to a friend and recognise his voice, as far away as Wexford. Sir Francis Freeling had been named. He became secretary to the Post Office. He served in the Bristol office two or three years before being translated to London to become the associate of Palmer, of mail-coach renown. The old city of Bristol had been under a cloud. In the year 1793 they had only one postman, and two or three years later two. Now they had 500. In the last 60 years the letters posted and delivered



in Bristol increased from 66 millions to 134 millions in the year. This was an enormous increase, and showed that Bristol was going to forge ahead again. It made them glad that the old city had once again aroused herself. The Post Office had become a giant in the kingdom, but it exercised its power as a kindly giant. They heard the demand for all sorts of reforms, but they felt that Mr. Austen Chamberlain was equal to the occasion.

"The Postal and Telegraph Benevolent Society" was submitted by Lieut.-Colonel Hobhouse, M.P., who said he was not sure that before long they would not have to add to their service, and include the telephonic operators as well. He noticed they depended in their work, and for the relief which they gave to their members, entirely upon the donations of their own members. That was satisfactory, not only to them, but to him as a Member of Parliament, because Members of Parliament seldom came to gatherings of that sort without being requested to make some contribution, direct or indirect, to the funds of the Society, so good as to give them a dinner. He



understood the provision of the Society was in addition to the official pension of the Post Office.

In reply, Mr. Botting said they must all feel very much flattered by the terms in which Colonel Hobhouse had referred to their Society. He felt that they might almost suggest to the Government that the questions of old age pensions and the financial position of friendly societies might be handed over to them to deal with. He might remind them of a remark made at the meeting, although having an M.P. present, perhaps he should not refer to it, that their Society got through more work in a day than the House of Commons did in a month. He considered they had at their Conference got through a good day's work. He would not give a long string of statistics, but he must mention that the Society had a membership of 19,600, had been in existence nearly 28 years, and during that time had paid to the nominees of deceased members just upon £300,000, made up chiefly of penny contributions. Such payments had been in many cases all that had stood between the widows and orphans and



absolute destitution. In considering this, they must not forget his friend beside him, whose fertile brain had created the Society. They must all regret to learn of Mr. Asher's retirement from the Service through ill-health, and they would all hope that the release from official work would prove beneficial to him. He (Mr. Botting) hoped that so long as the Society existed the name of Mr. Asher would never be forgotten.

Mr. Asher was received very heartily. He said the proposal that such a society should be formed was regarded as the day dream of a sanguine mind, but it was something to reflect upon, the immense amount of good that had been done in the course of years. More practical help he could not imagine rendering to the fellows in the Service. He trusted that the work of that day's Conference might re-echo and redound to the credit of the Bristol meeting, and he desired, in thanking their Bristol friends, to couple with them the names of Mr. E. C. Taylor and the Reception Committee.

In proposing "The City and County of Bristol," Mr. Edward Bennett said that he had attended



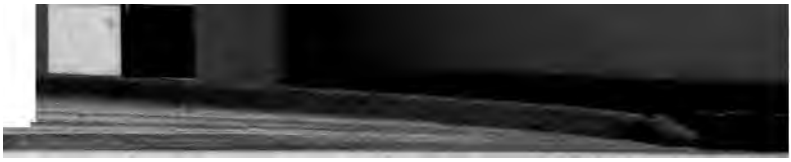
a great number of these banquets, and had had on several occasions to propose the toast of the particular town which was for the moment entertaining the Society. For this reason he was, perhaps, looked upon as a special pleader, and when he was praising a provincial city his tongue was thought to be in his cheek, and London was written on his heart. When Stella was told that Dean Swift had composed a poem, not in honour of her, but of Vanessa, she replied, with exquisite feminine amenity, that it was well known that the Dean could be eloquent over a broomstick. If he that night extolled Bristol above her other rivals, it would be said of him that he was a verbose individual, who had called in past years Leeds a beautiful and inspiring city, Liverpool a rising seaport, and Glasgow a town where urbanity and sweet reasonableness prevailed. It might be remembered of him that he had praised the Birmingham man for his childlike humility, and the Edinburgh man for his excessive modesty. It was his first visit to Bristol, and it was presumption on his part to speak on the subject at all. Silence was the better part when a man was



situated as he was. There were some exquisite lines he learnt as a child which conveyed a deep moral lesson to all day trippers :—

There was a young lady of Sweden
She went by the slow train to Weedon,
When she arrived at Weedon Station she made no observation,
But returned by the slow train to Sweden.

That was what he ought to have done. His heart went out to that young lady, and he often had pondered whether it was disgust, astonishment, or admiration which had inspired her silence. There was a special reason why Civil Servants should be drawn to Bristol. Doubtless even the Bristol Chamber of Commerce was acquainted with the process known as "passing over"—many persons in that room had perhaps undergone the operation—and those who read the history of Bristol felt a pull at their heart strings when they realised the fact that she also had been "passed over" by younger and more pushful rivals. But the capable Civil Servant never admitted the justice of being passed over. In many instances he established his case, and he did not rest satisfied until he had retrieved his position, and in time caught up his quondam



rivals: That, he took it, was the position of Bristol at the present time. She had relied too much on her ancient name, and had allowed mushroom places like Liverpool and Manchester to steal a march on her. She was coming to the front again; she had a glorious past, but she was going to have a brilliant future. He coupled with the toast the name of the High Sheriff. If he knew any evil of the High Sheriff he would not mention it that evening. He had still 24 hours to spend in Bristol, and a man could do a lot of evil as well as good in that time.

The High Sheriff made a short speech in reply to the toast.

Other good speeches followed.

The Post Office Cycling and Athletic Clubs have for some years past been in the habit of holding Sports at the County Ground in Bristol. These annual sports, having been held on Saturday afternoons, have usually been successful, and have attracted large crowds. In 1903, the sports, held on the 23rd May, attracted no fewer than nine thousand persons, owing to the unusual feature of motor cycle races having been arranged as a novelty—motor cycle racing not having



been carried on in Bristol before. There were several competitors, and London as well as local men, took part in the motor cycle races. Unfortunately, the track, which had been made some sixteen years previously for ordinary cycle competitions, was not suitable for motor racing at great speed. In one of the heats Bailey, of Bristol, was leading Barnes, of London, a noted motor cyclist, and through some mishap at or soon after the moment of Barnes getting past Bailey, his machine having run rather wide on the track, got out of his command, and dashed into the fringe of sightseers who were lying on the bank to get the best point of view. The result was a fearful carnage, and ten or eleven people were carried away insensible and much injured. In the end, three poor boys died in the Hospital, and fortunately the seven or eight other people who were injured, slowly recovered from their concussions and contusions. At the inquest, the verdict was "Accidental Death."

On the 23rd December, 1903, shortly after five o'clock p.m., the civic supply of electricity in Bristol failed, and shops, business premises, and houses depending upon it for light, were



plunged into darkness in all parts of the city. This was soon known to be due to a fire having broken out at Temple Back Generating Station, and the glare in the sky suggested that the outbreak had reached serious proportions. The Bristol Post Office has a full installation of electric light; and the failure could not have occurred at a more inconvenient time, as the pressure incidental to Christmas was being experienced. Fortunately, not only for the Post Office, but also for the general public, the large staff engaged in the interior of the building was able to cope with the extensive work before them practically without interruption, as throughout the whole of the department, gas is still laid on, and, beyond the shifting of one or two desks to within reasonable distance of gas jets, no inconvenience was caused after the burners and fittings—somewhat out of order through non-usage—were put to rights. The public hall, however, suffered most, as, when thus robbed of the electric light at one of the busiest periods of the evening, only scattered gas jets were available, and they had to be supplemented by lighted candles set at intervals around

the semi-circular counter. Some of the candles were in primitive holders, stuck in blocks of wood, and plugged firmly with nails; others were even without these supports. The Counter Officers had, therefore, to work under difficulties; but they got through their manifold duties expeditiously. The greatest inconvenience was occasioned at St. James's Parish Hall, which was being temporarily used as a Post Office. Here, there was no gas service available, and when the electric lights "gave out," the staff had to scurry hither and thither to get illuminants, which took the form of postmen's lamps, table lamps, candles in improvised holders, and such few hurricane lamps as were procurable at the shops, in the general run on them. The electric light was fully restored in the evening of the next day. This fire recalls an occasion when at St. Martin's-le-Grand, the gas supply failed, and the largest Post Office business of the world was placed at a standstill. The officials, however, were equal to the emergency, and cartloads of candles were quickly obtained. The staff of carpenters employed on the building improvised receptacles,



and the postal work was proceeded with, candles as they burnt out being replaced by men told off for the purpose. Some time afterwards, it was suggested that the stock of candles left over should be disposed of, but it was then found that these had been devoured by the innumerable rats which infest the old building.



CHAPTER XVII.

QUAINT ADDRESSES AND THE DEAN'S PECULIAR SIGNATURE.—AMUSING INCIDENTS AND THE POSTMAN'S KNOCK. —HUMOROUS APPLICATIONS.

THE members of the Bristol Post Office Staff have to display no little perspicacity in elucidating quaint addresses on letters going through the post. To Postman Wade must go the credit of having correctly surmised that the letter addressed simply "25th March, Clifton," to which allusion has already been made, was intended for Lady Day, the wife of the Judge of Assize, Mr. Justice Day, then staying in Clifton. A letter addressed to "W. D. & H. O.", without street or town being named, came from a distant county, and was delivered to the firm of Messrs. W. D. & H. O. Wills & Co., in Bristol, for whom it was found to be intended.

The pictorial illustrations herewith demonstrate two instances of letters correctly delivered by the



post office officials after the address had been deciphered by their *Sherlock Holmes*.

In the *Bristol Royal Mail* particulars were given of the peculiar way in which correspondents addressed their envelopes to the Post Office, Bristol. Since that publication was issued, other peculiar instances have occurred. The following are cases of the kind, viz. :—The Head Postmaster (Master's Parlour). The Honourable The Postmaster. Postmaster Number 58 (in answer to query on Form " Postmasters No. 58 "). Master, General Post Office, Bristol.

The Dean of Bristol in the preface of his very interesting book " Odds and Ends," writes of the many liberties people take with his surname in their communications, and says that none of their imaginary names are so pleasing to him as his own proper name of Pigou. That his correspondents are not altogether to be blamed may be gathered from the fact that the Dean, in an official letter to the Bristol Post Office, signed his name thus:





LETTER CORRECTLY DELIVERED TO DR. W. G. GRACE,
AT BRISTOL.



QUAINT ADDRESS.

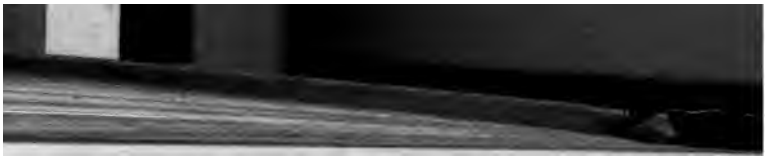




The signature was submitted to 22 officers who decipher the badly addressed letters at the "Blind" Division, at "Head Quarters," in the General Post Office, London, and their interpretations were as follows, viz.:—J: Rogers, J: Egan, Ryan, J: Lyon, Roper, J. or T. Rogers, J. Rogers, J: Logan, J: Lyon, J. Logan, J: Pogon, T: Lyon, J: Rogers, J: Goson, J. Rogers, J: Eason, T: Egan, J: Goyfer, J: G: Offin, J. Lyons, J: Pyon, J: Pijon:

It is only fair to the "Blind Writers" to say, that the address heading of the Dean's letter was withdrawn before the signature was submitted to them. With that clue they would readily have been able to find out the writer's correct name from their books of reference, so that the Dean is not likely to suffer delay of his letters in the Returned Letter Office through peculiarity of signature:

During a recent Christmas Season a parcel, containing a lb. roll of butter was received, without address, in the returned Letter Office, Bristol, from a Devonshire town. As the parcel could not be returned to the sender within such a time



as the contents remained good, the butter was sold for cooking purposes. When placed upon the kitchen table, the edge of a yellow coin was observed to be slightly protruding from the roll. The coin turned out to be a sovereign, and search was made to ascertain whether any more money had been so strangely hidden, but only the £1 was found. The money was at once forwarded to the proper Post Office authorities, and subsequently returned to the sender, but would-be imitators are warned that such practices are strongly deprecated by the Post Office Department as tending to lead to dishonesty.

The Corporation of Bristol erected electric light ventilators in different parts of the city. At a distance, possibly, these ventilators appear, to the short-sighted, to be Post Office pillar boxes, as they are iron boxes placed on the pavement near the kerbstones. They differ in many respects from the familiar Post Office boxes, for, instead of being round, they are square ; they are painted of a different colour, and are only about two feet high. They are without indicators, notice plates, and doors. There is a slightly

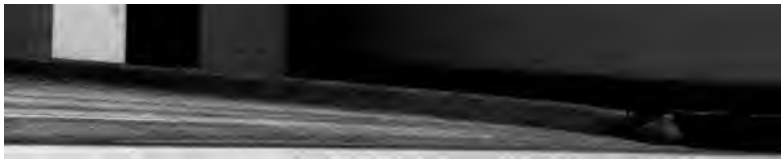


raised top for the passage of air. Through this opening of one of the boxes letters have been recently posted by three separate persons. Such carelessness is astonishing.

The Electric Lighting Authorities, to prevent further mishaps of the kind, arranged to have the apertures closed by means of perforated zinc.

Even in these days of primary and secondary education, people have still a very elementary knowledge of matters relating to the Postal and Telegraph Services, in which everyone is vitally concerned. Recently, an intelligent servant who had received a Board School education was sent with a telegram to a Telegraph Office, and told to pay for a reply. Having paid for the reply, she expected to get one there and then, and it was only with very great reluctance that she was induced to leave the Telegraph Office without a reply to convey back to the person who entrusted her with the commission.

A complainant to the Post Office expressed himself thus:—"Jan. 1st, 1904. Dear Sir,—Your Postman on 28th by the First post In the morning, With a newspaper,) My Sister Was at the back at



the time Getting Sum cole In. He could not Stop a few Minets, but nock So hard That he brock a New Nocker on the door and then run off, we not Seen Him Since,) I. think he Ought to bye Nother Nocker. Ther to much that boy Game with Sum them The paper after came With Nother postman, He was on a bike wot Broke the Nocker and Off at once and left the Peces on the door Step, The postman got a Cast In his eye.) I. Should Not think he wood want us to pay for a Nother Why dont him coum as A Man and pay for one Sir. I. Must conclued with Best regurds to you, Yours Truley, F. H. G."

Travellers from North and East to the West of England and *vice versa* are aware that the Bristol Joint Great Western and Midland station is a busy railway centre. At a recent Christmas season, there was much remark on the part of the railway passengers with respect to the platforms being blocked up with barrows containing mails and the large stack of parcel baskets to be met with at every point. Said one traveller, "It's all blooming Post Office on the platform and no room for travellers to get about." Said

another, "The late arrival of the train was all due to that 'parcel post.'"

A sub-postmaster in the Bristol district was called to account for employing on the delivery of letters a boy of fourteen years of age, instead of a person of sixteen years of age or upwards. He nominated another person, who, he stated, was of proper age, being over 16 years old. A year or two afterwards a question of discipline arose about this individual, and it then transpired that he was 68 years of age—rather too old to commence life in His Majesty's Service!

The phrase "guileless Ministers" in the speech of a former Prime Minister on the fiscal question (1903) became in course of telegraphing "guileless monsters," and so reached the Bristol press. Fortunately, the newspaper proof readers were wide awake, and the error was corrected in time.

Correspondents have a peculiar idea of the functions devolving on a postmaster, as the following letters will indicate, viz.:—

"Brighton, March 13th, 1904. To the Postmaster. Sir,—Would you have pleased to try and get me a small tin of very light coloured dry snuff



(I think it is called Lundifoot) from one of the leading tobacconists in Bristol. If you will let me know the amount thereof I will send you the money for the same before you send it. I am, Yours, etc., J. S. A.

"Scarborough, 6th August, 1904: Sir,—Would you please be good enough to let me know by return, whether the nightingale is in song in Clifton Woods at the present time. Thanking you in anticipation, and apologising for troubling you: Believe me, Yours truly, (sd.) (Mrs.) F. F."

"Cardiff, April 29th, 1902. Sir,—May I ask you the favour to hand over the enclosed Bristol Blister to the chemist who sells it in your town, when some person of your office passes the shop. I received considerable benefit from the blister. I shall be very much obliged to you and the chemist if he will be so good to let me know how he sells them: I am, Yours truly, (Sd.) T. B."

Not only are the articles themselves of a diversified character that pass through the parcel post, but the mode of packing often produces a certain amount of dubiousness in the minds of the Parcel Department officials as to which

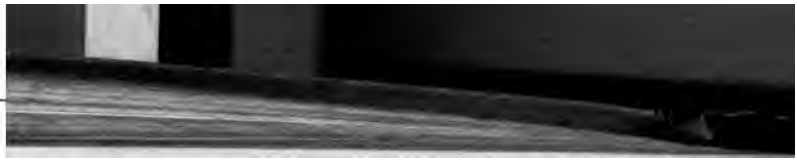



£20-0-0 Bristol October 5th 1826
Received of Thos Edmonds servant to
Mr Yorke Redland
the Sum of Twenty Pounds
for The Daniel P. P. Miles J. J. Harford Jos. Reynolds Th. Protheroe
Robt. Bright & Tho. Sanders Esqrs Trustees of the Bristol Man Trad of Savings
Jos. Balch
Mary Ayers
Managers
This must not be brought to the Bank till the Money is taken out, but then it must be returned.

FACSIMILE OF A RECEIPT FOR £20 GIVEN BY THE TRUSTEES OF THE BRISTOL PRUDENT MAN'S FUND SUBMITTED FOR PAYMENT 78 YEARS AFTER ISSUE.

is really the "Right side up," and how to handle the packages. The sender of a rabbit, however, left no doubt on the matter, as he had arranged poor defunct "Bunny" in such a way that its head was securely tied between its hind legs, and the latter formed a convenient handle, the front legs being tucked under the neck, and the rabbit presenting the appearance of a ball. Another incident was of rather an amusing character. The "tie-on" labels had become detached from two packages which reached Bristol. A label which properly belonged to a bottle of cough medicine was attached in the Returned Letter Office to an old slipper, and the label proper to the medicine was delivered without packet or other attachment to the shoemaker for whom the slipper was intended. Fortunately, upon inquiry being made by the interested parties, the medicine and slipper were delivered to the rightful addressees.

The facsimile herewith of a receipt for £20 given by the Trustees of the Bristol Prudent Man's Fund of Savings recently submitted for payment, 78 years after issue, will be interesting to Post Office Savings Bank Investors of the present day.

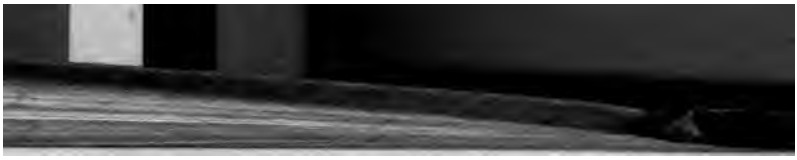


CHAPTER XVIII.

POSTMASTERS-GENERAL (RT. HON. A. MORLEY AND THE MARQUIS OF LONDONDERRY) VISIT BRISTOL.—THE POSTMASTER OF THE HOUSE OF COMMONS.—THE KING'S NEW POSTAGE STAMPS.—CORONATION OF KING EDWARD VII.—LOYALTY OF POST OFFICE STAFF.—MRS. VARNAM-COGGAN'S CORONATION POEM.

MR. ARNOLD MORLEY, during his term of office as Postmaster-General, visited Bristol, and was presented by the Chamber of Commerce with an address, worded thus:—"The Bristol Incorporated Chamber of Commerce and Shipping. To the Right Honorable Arnold Morley, M.P., Her Majesty's Postmaster General. Sir,—The Council of the Bristol Incorporated Chamber of Commerce and Shipping are glad to embrace the opportunity afforded by your visit to this city of expressing their high appreciation of the services rendered to the state in general and to the commercial com-

munity in particular by the energy and enterprise displayed in your administration of the Postal and Telegraphic Departments of the public service. We recognise that in matters such as are ranged under your control there can be no finality, and that however excellent our present Postal and Telegraphic arrangements may appear, your Departments must be quick to discern the arrival of fresh needs such as our rapidly developing civilization must constantly bring. We rejoice in the abundant evidence that you have thoroughly appreciated the absolute necessity for continual advance and adaptation, and that you are labouring with such zeal to keep the complicated machinery of the General Post Office up to date and equal to the immense and ever increasing strain it has to bear, whilst the Council think it only right to acknowledge the marked and unvarying urbanity with which, at all times, you and your officials receive and discuss any suggestions for the improvement of the services, emanating from Chambers of Commerce and other sources. In conclusion, the Council recognise in your person the son of a late

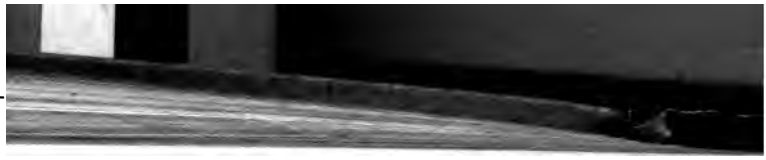


highly-esteemed Parliamentary Representative of the city of Bristol, Mr. Samuel Morley, who for many years took an active interest in the proceedings of this Chamber and of the Association of Chambers of Commerce of the United Kingdom; and the Council take this occasion to tender you their sincere congratulations on the high position you have attained in the councils and government of this great Empire. We remain, Sir, Your obedient servants, (Sd.) George H. Perrin, President; E. Burrow Hill, Mark Whitwill, Vice-Presidents; H. J. Spear, Secretary. Bristol, 1st Nov., 1894."

The Marquis of Londonderry, when Postmaster-General, was the chief guest at the annual banquet of the Bristol Chamber of Commerce, held at the Royal Hotel, Bristol, under the presidency of Mr. T. T. Lindrea, on the 24th April, 1901. Among those present were Earl Waldegrave, Sir Herbert Ashman, J.P., Sir Frederick Wills, M.P., Judge Austin, J.P., Mr. C. E. Hobhouse, M.P., Mr. Lewis Fry, the Lord Mayor (Mr. Colthurst Godwin), the High Sheriff (Mr. E. B. James), etc.



In responding to the toast of "His Majesty's Ministers," Lord Londonderry alluded to the great growth that had taken place in the population, trade, and prosperity of Bristol during the late Queen's reign. Last February, he said, in eighteen days, the amount paid on goods taken out of Bond reached £487,000. Of this sum, no less than £430,000 was paid in the last eight days, and of this £370,000 came from a single firm for withdrawals of tobacco from Bond. This included the enormous single cheque paid by that firm one day for a quarter of a million—the largest single cheque ever known at His Majesty's Customs at Bristol. He also congratulated Bristol on the great development to her trade that must come through the inauguration in February last of the new service to the West Indies. This, he was sure, would do much not only to strengthen the ties that bound this country to the West Indian Colonies, but also to restore to Bristol some measure of that position she had once enjoyed in the trade of the United Kingdom. He was rather glad his good friend the Chancellor of the



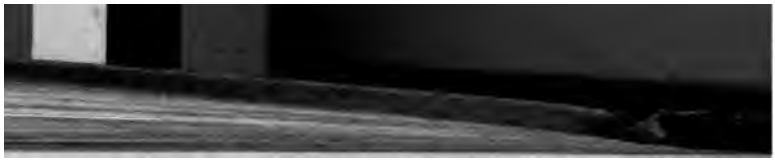
Exchequer was not there that night, for if he heard how much was spent in benefiting those who relied on the Post Office, and how little they handed over to the national exchequer, he would not be inclined to meet him when he suggested certain postal reforms, as he intended to do next year. He hoped they would invite him to meet Sir Michael in Bristol, for he might then be inclined to grant him (the speaker) any request he might make. He wanted them to recognise that the Postmaster-General's good intentions, and they were many, were controlled by Parliamentary and statutory exigencies. He had also been asked to improve their rates on foreign letters and parcels, as well as to cheapen the delivery of letters and parcels from abroad; but it was entirely forgotten that he had to reckon with foreign Powers. A Postal Reformer had declared, in a letter, that it was possible to create an ideal Post Office. He wished he could accede to every one of his requests, but he had to consider Parliament; he was not master himself. He thought that if they were to meet the requirements of the



public as they were anxious to do, they must proceed in the course in which they were moving at present—with steadiness and sureness, and not promise things which it was impossible to fulfil.

The Ex-Postmaster of the House of Commons, Mr. E. W. Pike, is a Somersetshire man; he was born at Ilchester, and his grandfather was the last Governor of the Gaol of that town. When Mr. Pike was ten years of age, his father received an appointment under the act constituting the new County Court system, and removed to Temple Cloud in the Bristol district. The family afterwards moved to the adjacent village of Clutton, and Mr. Pike went there with the other members.

Mr. Pike remembers that the Post Office at Temple Cloud was held by Mrs. Carter, and after her death John Spear had the office. Mr. Pike's active service in the Post Office terminated on Wednesday, the 14th September, 1903. His experience in the Post Office was unique, and no wonder that he felt proud on retiring, that during a service of nearly 46 years he had



given full satisfaction to his superiors in the Post Office, and to have had the approbation of the Members of the House of Commons specially expressed to him by the Prime Minister, Mr. A. J. Balfour.

There was no small stir at the public counter of the Bristol Post Office on the first day of January, 1902, the day of issue of the new ½d., 1d., 2½d., and 6d. postage stamps, bearing the medallion portrait of King Edward the VIIth. People were very anxious to become possessed of specimens, and many of the stamps sold were evidently intended to adorn collector's books. The sales on the 1st January, 1902, were:—½d., £175; 1d., £500; 2½d., £27 10s.; 6d., £66 9s., and were slightly in excess of the average. The general public demanded the new kind almost without exception, but firms took old stamps to the extent of 10 per cent. of the whole lot supplied.

The Staff of the Bristol Post Office sent an illuminated address to the King for His Majesty's Coronation Day.

Mrs. Pattie E. Varnam-Coggan, a lady who at the time was Postmistress of Chipping Sod-



bury composed the following hymn in connection with the event.

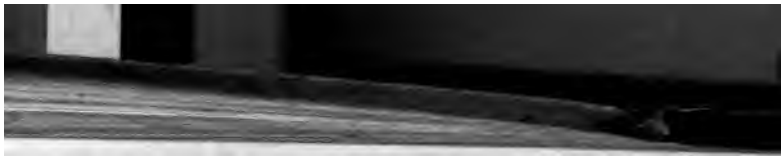
God save our King!
Up to the sky let loyal voices ring,
Joy to the land this Festal Day shall bring:
Roar guns! and peal O bells!
As loud the anthem swells—
God save our King!

God save our Queen!
A nobler consort ne'er hath England seen!
Bless her pure life with love and peace serene.
Crown her with heavenly grace,
Strength for her royal place—
God save our Queen!

God save our land!
As suppliants now before Thy Throne we stand,
Craving for gifts from Thine all-powerful Hand.
Let none make us afraid,
Foes find us undismayed—
God save our land!

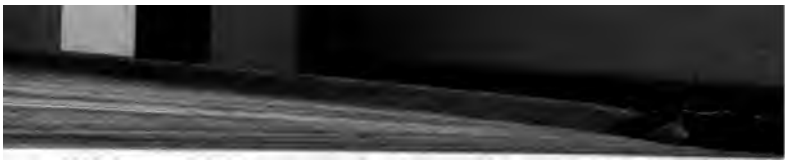
Great King of kings!
Ruler supreme o'er men and earthly things,
Eternal source from which all goodness springs!
Bless Thou the Royal Pair,
Grant them Thy joy to share,
Great King of kings!

God! thanks for peace!
Praiséd be Thou Who makest war to cease,
O'er all our Empire wide THY reign increase!
Let all men seek for good,
In one blest brotherhood—
God! thanks for peace!



The staff also made elaborate arrangements to take an active part in the grand procession which had been organized at Bristol to celebrate the Coronation, but, alas, the procession had to be postponed in consequence of the King's sudden illness on the 24th June, and finally was abandoned altogether. The Post Office section, which was to have been honoured with first place in the procession, was designed to give the Bristol public some idea of the working of this most useful branch of the public service. The section was to have been arranged as follows:—Telegraph Messengers' Drum and Fife Band. Company of Telegraph Messengers, with Carbines. Telegraph Messengers' Cycle Corps. Company of Postmen. Mail Carrier Tricycle. Country Mail Cart—present day. Town Mail Van—present day. London to Bristol Royal Mail Coach of 100 years since, with Coachman and Guard in Royal livery of the Period. Guard carrying an ancient Mail Guard's blunderbuss, borrowed from the armoury of Mr. Rawlins, of Syston Court. Post Office Tableau, illustrative of the Collecting, Stamping, and







ADDRESS TO THE KING.

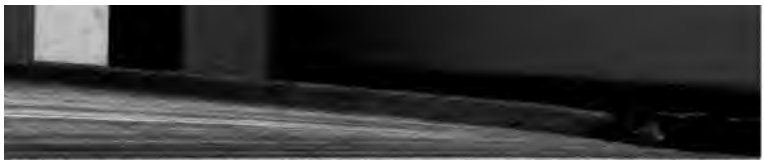


Sorting of Letters, and the Despatch of Mail Bags; also the sending of Telegrams.

The following acknowledgment of the Address was received on the King's recovery :—

"Home Office, Whitehall, 5 Sept., 1902. Sir,—I am commanded by the King to convey to you hereby His Majesty's thanks for the Loyal and Dutiful Address of the Staff of the Postal and Telegraph Services at Bristol. I am, Sir, your obedient servant, A. Akers Douglas. The Surveyor Postmaster, Post Office, Bristol."

The address to His Majesty is here reproduced, and as the sentiments contained in it represent the writer's wishes for King and Queen, it may, perhaps, fittingly close the chapters of "The King's Post."



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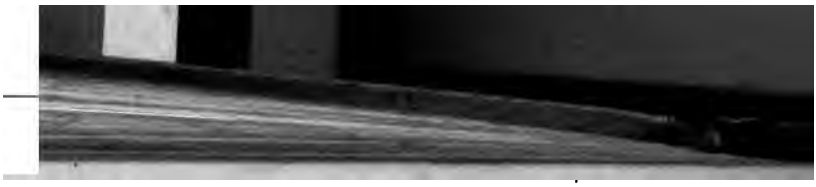


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